

# LESSONS WITH A GRANDMASTER III

Strategic and tactical ideas in modern chess



Boris Gulko & Dr. Joel R. Sneed

*"This title is destined to be a classic..."* John D. Warth, ChessCafe.com, on Volume 1

EVERYMAN CHESS

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**EVERYMAN CHESS**

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**Boris Gulko** is one of the most distinguished Grandmasters in the chess world. He's a former Soviet Champion and has also won the US Championship twice since his immigration in 1986, making him the only chess player ever to have held both the American and Soviet championship titles. He is also one of the few players to hold a plus score against Garry Kasparov.

**Dr. Joel R. Sneed** is a professor of psychology at Queens College of the City University of New York. He's an amateur chess enthusiast and a student of Boris Gulko's.

**Also by the Authors:**

*Lessons with a Grandmaster*

*Lessons with a Grandmaster 2*



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# Preface

The club player is unaware of the subtleties that exist in grandmaster chess both strategically and tactically. The psychology of the chess struggle is even less well understood. Grandmasters analyze chess at a depth that is unfathomable to amateurs; moreover, they have extensive knowledge of chess history and opening theory as well as extraordinary endgame technique and tactical vision. However, having reached such a high level can make it difficult to understand what is lacking in the mind of the amateur, and therefore, what to explain, what not to explain, what to assume, etc. The purpose of this book is to bridge the gap between grandmaster and amateur through a conversation between Grandmaster Boris Gulko, the only player to hold both the USSR and US championship titles, and student Joel R. Sneed, PhD, a professor of psychology and amateur chess player.

# Introduction

*Boris:* So we meet again to continue our studies. I hope you have benefitted from the lessons so far and that your chess is improving.

*Joel:* My game continues to improve. My rating is over 1900 now and I was able to take clear first in the Marshall Chess Club U200 tournament this year.

*Boris:* Very good! That's excellent progress.

*Joel:* What did you have in mind for this next installment of lessons?

*Boris:* Well, the first volume of this series was devoted mainly to strategic problems, and the second primarily to dynamic problems. This volume is devoted to the connection between strategic and dynamic factors and the psychology of the struggle inherent in chess. We will consider such topics as the weakness of squares of one color and how this translates to the fight for the initiative (see, for example, my games against Shabalov, Benjamin, and Kholmov), the struggle for the initiative, counterplay, prophylaxis, the struggle for the center, and the interconnections between these various themes.

Special chapters are devoted to the advantage of the bishop pair, the struggle of minor pieces, the dynamic power of the passed pawn on the d-file (my game against Ilya Gurevich), and provoking counterplay from the opponent with the purpose of using the weakness such counterplay creates against him (my game against Geller).

Some strategic ideas will also be considered that are specific to certain openings, such as the Sicilian (different ideas connected to Black's counterplay) and the Catalan (different ideas connected to White's struggle for the advantage). In all the games, we consider chess psychology, but the second one against Browne (Game 21) will be devoted exclusively to the topic of the psychology of chess thinking.

As in our previous two volumes, we will solve many different types of problems with different levels of complexity, ranging from 1 (easiest) to 6 (hardest). To get the most out of the book, I would recommend to the reader to try and solve these problems yourself before reading on.

*Joel:* That sounds great, let's get started!

# Chapter One

## The Advantage of the Two Bishops

*Boris:* Our first topic will be the advantage of the two bishops.

*Joel:* Great! I always hear about how grandmasters love their bishops, but I never seem to be able to take advantage of having them myself.

*Boris:* The advantage of the two bishops becomes most prominent in the endgame when the number of pieces is reduced. In the middlegame, the two bishops can be overshadowed by other factors, such as who has the open file or a weak king, but in the endgame the bishops are usually better than either bishop and knight or two knights. For example, if you are a pawn up in the middlegame you could be worse, but if you are a pawn up in an endgame (say king and pawn against king) you are better even it turns out to be a technically drawn position. In the following game you will see two bishops dominate bishop and knight.

### Game 1

**B.Gulko-A.Kremenietzky**  
Moscow Championship 1983  
*Sicilian Defence*

**1 e4 c5 2 ♖c3 e6 3 g3 d5 4 exd5 exd5 5 ♗g2 ♘f6 6 d3!?**

I tried this move in several games with good results. Black usually has to play ...d5-d4 because the pawn on d5 is underprotected, which gives White interesting opportunities. I've had good results with this variation, even though it has been considered harmless ever since the candidates match between Spassky and Korchnoi. In that match, White played 6 ♗ge2?! d4! 7 ♗e4 ♘xe4 8 ♗xe4 ♘d7! 9 d3 ♗f6 with a comfortable game for Black in

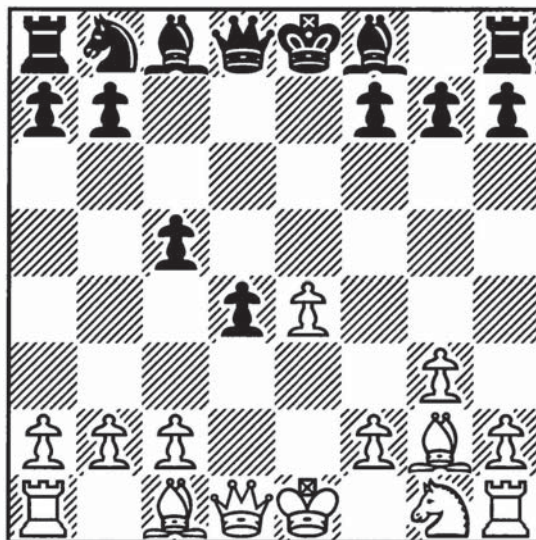


B.Spassky-V.Korchnoi, Kiev (5th matchgame) 1968.

6...d4 7 ♖e4 ♜xe4

Now White can implement his opening idea. In the earlier game, B.Gulko-L.Alburt, Alma-Ata 1971, Black tried 7...♜d5 8 ♜e2 ♜c6 9 0-0 ♙e7 10 c4 dxc3 11 bxc3 0-0 12 ♚b1 and White obtained a position with good prospects.

8 dxe4!?



*Boris:* The idea of this move, a novelty at the time, was to bring my knight from g1 to d5 via e2 and f4, which would give me the initiative.

*Joel:* Yes, I've played this variation as Black and never saw this move or prepared anything against it.

*Boris:* Yes, it is unusual.

*Joel:* Since I've never seen it, what is the objective value of this move?

*Boris:* *The objective value of moves in chess is very often subjective.* There isn't any way that gives you a certain advantage, otherwise everyone would play the same thing and that would be the end of chess. This move has an idea attached to it and Black has to come up with a plan to defend against it. In this game, my opponent was unable to come up with such a plan. Theory hasn't had much to say about this variation, but in practice Black has to figure out what to do about the knight on d5.

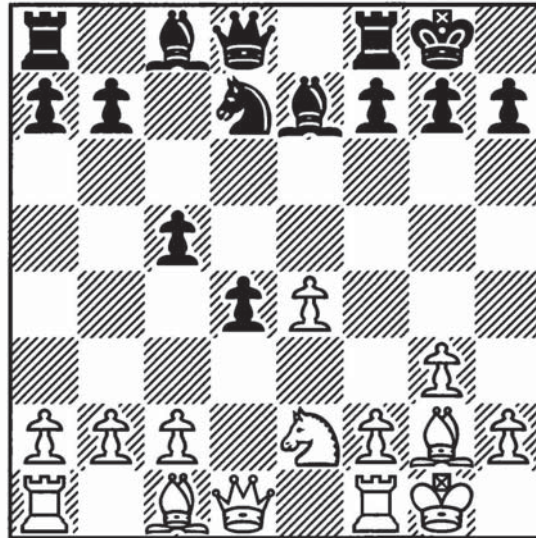
*Joel:* So objectivity is subjective?

*Boris:* Yes, and maybe not only in chess.

8...♙e7

Black rejected the most natural move in the position, which was 8...♜c6, because he wants to meet White's ♜d5 by moving his own knight to f6 to exchange it.

9 ♜e2 0-0 10 0-0 ♜d7?!



**Exercise:** What you would play? (difficulty level 3)

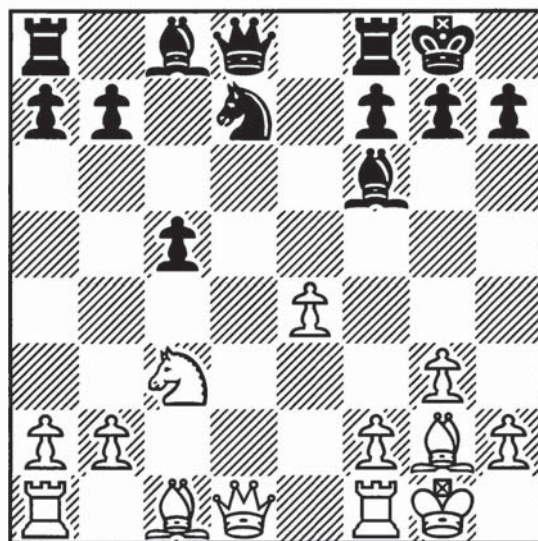
**Joel:** I considered 11 f4 but that seemed too loosening. I also thought about 11 ♘f4 which seemed good against moves like 11...♘f6 (because of 12 e5) or 11...♘b6 (because of 12 a4), but 11...♙g5 looked like a good response. Therefore, I came up with 11 ♙f4 with the idea of 11...♙g5 12 ♖d2, when White can take on f4 with the knight and play ♙ad1 followed by c2-c3, pressuring Black's center.

**Boris:** I like your estimation of 11 ♘f4 as promising White a good position, but not your suggestion of 11 ♙f4 because the bishop on f4 restricts your knight on e2. After 11 ♙f4 Black could play 11...♙f6 and the knight on e2 doesn't have good prospects. Your suggestion of 11 f4 is worse than 11 ♙f4, because the pawn on f4 restricts both the knight and bishop. It would make sense if you had an attack on the king but this is a mere fantasy with the knight on e2 and bishop on c1. Remember, we discussed in our first book: *Improve the position of your pieces before pushing your pawns.*

With Black's knight on d7, White has better options than his original plan of ♘e2-f4-d5. Here White has to shift gears and try to destroy Black's center while keeping the option open of occupying the d5-square.

For Black 10...♘c6 was better, but in that case White would continue with his knight maneuver.

**11 c3! dxc3 12 ♘xc3 ♙f6**



**Exercise:** What you would play here? (difficulty level 2)

*Joel:* I thought about playing 13 ♖b5 or 13 ♖d5 with the idea of following that up with ♗f4, threatening ♗c7. I realized that I really needed my bishop on f4 to accomplish this, especially since White has two ways of attacking c7 (b5 and d5), so I would play 13 ♗f4 first preparing this plan.

*Boris:* The white knight has a natural protected square on d5, so 13 ♖b5 is illogical. It can also be met by, for example, by 13...♜b6. Your final suggestion 13 ♗f4 is reasonable, but I don't like the simplifications after 13...♗e5. *When you have a dynamic advantage it is better to keep the pieces on the board.*

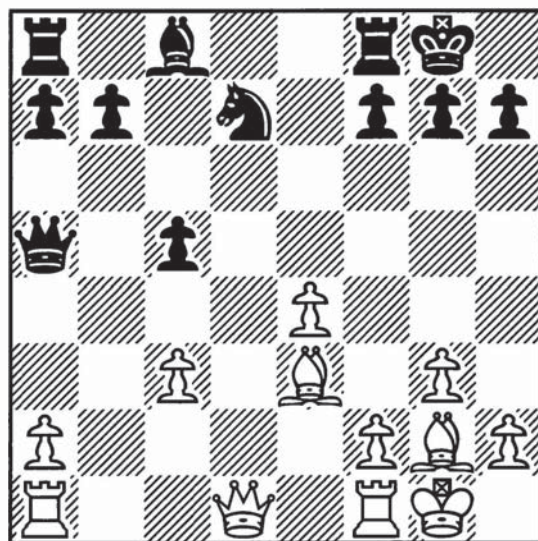
**13 ♗e3!**

My choice at the time was between 13 ♖d5 or 13 ♗e3. In the case of 13 ♖d5 Black has 13...♗d4! 14 ♜b1 (14 ♗e3 deserved attention, when White would have strong pressure for the pawn after 14...♗xb2 15 ♜b1) 14...♖b6 and Black fulfils his opening plan of neutralizing the knight on d5 with his own knight. So for White it is more important to cover the d4-square. With this move I also restrict the movement of Black's knight because he has to protect c5.

**13...♗xc3! 14 bxc3 ♜a5**

Black chose his best option. Now, in exchange for giving White the two bishops, Black will have counterplay against White's weak c3-pawn. If Black can complete his development, he will have a good game.





**Exercise:** How can White keep the initiative? (difficulty level 5)

*Joel:* I looked at 15 ♕d5, trying to prevent Black from developing his pieces. For example, if 15...♖fd8 16 ♖fd1, the knight is pinned and it is difficult for Black to untangle. But what about 15...♕xc3 - ? My intuition tells me that losing the c-pawn is not so bad because White can win it back easily enough (c5 is weak) and he will have the bishop pair and the initiative as compensation. After 16 ♖ac1, followed by 17 ♖fd1, White is fully mobilized and Black all tied up.

*Boris:* Very good. This positional pawn sacrifice prevents the knight from finishing its development.

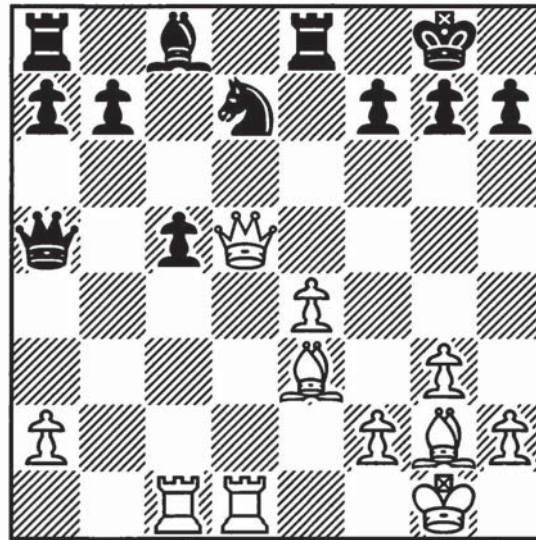
**15 ♕d5!**

If White defends the c3-pawn, Black would obtain a completely playable position; for example, 15 ♕c2 ♘e5! or 15 ♕d3 ♘b6!.

**15...♖e8 16 ♖fd1 ♕xc3 17 ♖ac1 ♕a5**

*Boris:* Black chooses the best square for the queen. In other cases White would have a clear advantage; for example, 17...♕a3 18 e5! or 17...♕b2!? 18 f4 ♘b6 19 ♕xc5 ♕xa2 20 e5.





**Exercise:** Find the best way to develop the initiative? (difficulty level 6)

*Joel:* I looked at 18 f4 but rejected it due to 18...♟f6. I then considered 18 ♟xc5, which looked good after 18...♟xc5 19 ♟xc5, hitting the queen. But Black doesn't have to recapture immediately. He could instead play 18...♟f6. White could respond with 19 ♟d6 and, after 19...♟e6 (threatening ...♟ad8), then 20 ♟b4, attacking the queen, followed by 21 e5.

*Boris:* White's problem is that he has to choose between several good moves which maintain the initiative, but only one transposes directly into a winning endgame.

**18 e5!!**

Instead, 18 f4 ♟b6 (after 18...♟f6 19 ♟xc5, the e4-pawn is untouchable because of mate on the back rank and White will very soon push e4-e5) 19 ♟xc5 ♟xa2 leads to a tense position; while in the case of 18 ♟xc5, White preserves a pleasant position but loses the advantage of the two bishops.

**18...♟xe5**

Black doesn't have anything better.

a) 18...♟xe5? loses to 19 ♟xc5 ♟a4 20 ♟d4 ♟d7 21 ♟xe5 ♟xe5 22 ♟xe5.

b) In the case of 18...♟b8, White has 19 ♟f4! with an X-ray attack on the rook. Now you see the advantage of playing e4-e5 without a pawn on f4. Play might continue 19...b5 20 ♟c6 ♟c6 (if 20...♟b7 21 ♟xc5 or 20...♟b6 21 ♟c7 ♟f8 22 ♟d8 ♟xd8 23 ♟xd8 ♟e6 24 ♟e3 ♟a6 25 ♟d1 with a winning position) 21 ♟d6 ♟b6 22 ♟xb6 axb6 23 ♟cd1, when Black's position is desperate. However, White has an even more resolute continuation in 20 e6! fxe6 21 ♟h5 g6 22 ♟g5 ♟b6 23 ♟xd7! ♟xd7 24 ♟e5 and Black is defenseless.

c) The middlegame after 18...♟b6!? 19 ♟xc5 ♟xa2 20 ♟c7! is bad for Black too.

**19 ♟xe5 ♟xe5 20 ♟xc5 ♟xc5**

After 20...♟b6 21 ♟xe5, White wins since both the queen and mate are threatened.

**21 ♟xc5 ♟g4!**

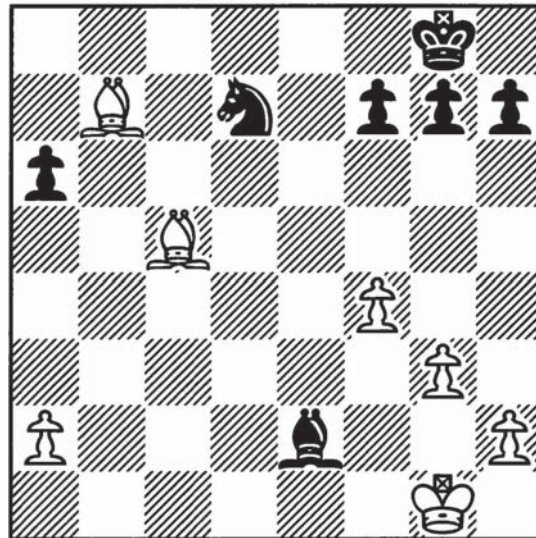
**Joel:** Why is this such a good move? It seems very natural.

**Boris:** Yes, it is very natural but it is also good. Returning the pawn is the only reasonable way for Black to complete his development.

**22 ♖xb7 ♜xd1?!**

22...♜e8!? was more stubborn. As I indicated earlier, the strength of the two bishops increases the more pieces are exchanged, so Black should have opted to keep the rooks on the board.

**23 ♜xa8 a6 24 ♜b7 ♜e2 25 f4 ♞d7**



**Exercise:** What you would play? (difficulty level 2)

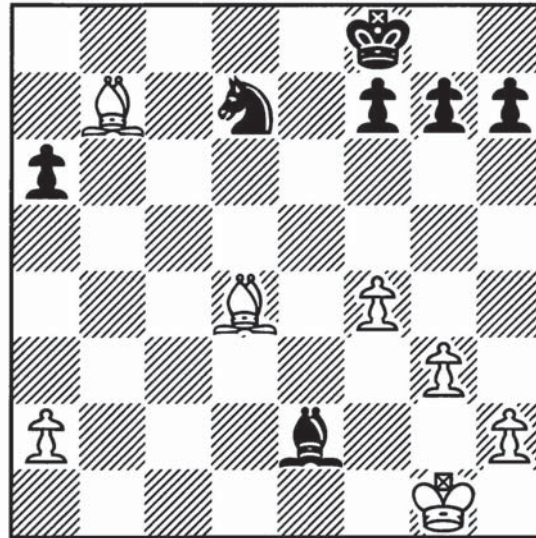
**Joel:** I would play 26 ♜d4, dominating the knight, with the idea of 27 ♜c6 ♞f6 28 ♜xf6.

**Boris:** You're right that 26 ♜d4 dominates the knight, but your idea of 27 ♜c6 is not good because Black has 27...♜b5. The idea is not to exchange bishop for knight immediately but to restrict Black's pieces and activate the king.

**26 ♜d4!**

26 ♜b4? would have allowed Black to build a fortress: 26...♞b6 27 ♔f2 ♜c4 28 a3 ♞d5 29 ♜d2 f5! and the white king does not have a route into Black's camp. This is a very important moment because *building a fortress is the only hope for the weak side in a bishop pair versus bishop and knight endgame.*

**26...♔f8**



**Exercise:** What does White have to play? (difficulty level 3)

*Joel:* Well, as before, I thought about playing 27 ♖c6 with the idea of 27...♟f6 28 ♖xf6.

*Boris:* Again, 27 ♖c6 is not dangerous because of 27...♙b5. For White it is useful to prevent Black light-squared bishop from occupying the a2-g8 diagonal directly.

**27 ♙d5!**

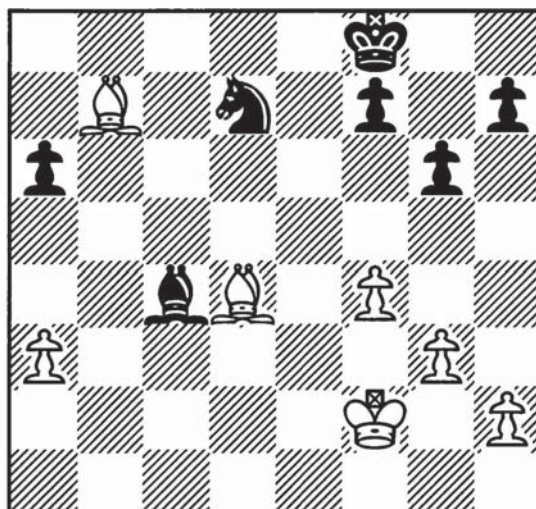
Weaker was 27 ♔f2 ♙c4 28 a3 f6, when Black's position is much safer than in the game.

**27...g6 28 ♔f2 ♙g4 29 ♙b7**

29 ♔e3? would have been a mistake because of 29...♙e6!, exchanging one of White's bishops.

**29...♙e6 30 a3 ♙c4**

Black's bishop finally reaches the a2-g8 diagonal, but only after he has decisively weakened the dark squares with ...g7-g6.





**Exercise:** What is White's priority in this position? (difficulty level 4)

**31 ♖e3?!**

*Joel:* Why do you consider this move to be dubious?

*Boris:* White's priority had to be to create objects for attack on the kingside. After 31 g4!, Black's h-pawn would become permanently weak.

*Joel:* Why is that?

*Boris:* Because it cannot be placed on a square protected by another pawn. This follows the important endgame principle: *One weakness is not enough to win; you have to create two weaknesses.*

**31...♗e7?!**

Black should have exploited White's inaccuracy by playing either 31...f5! or 31...h5!.

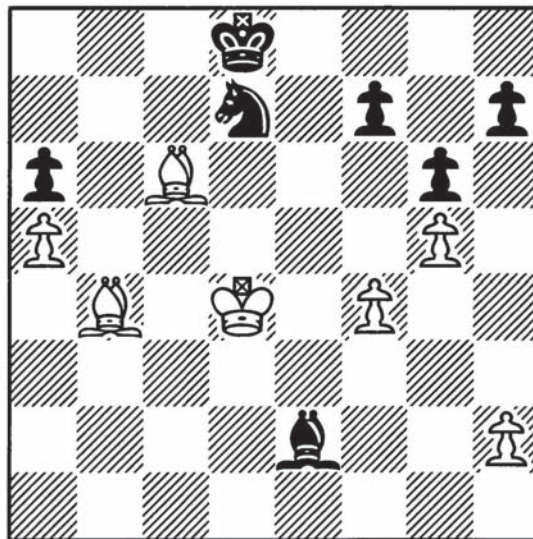
**32 ♜c3?! ♜b5?! 33 g4!**

At last, White finds the correct path.

**33...♖e8 34 ♖d4 ♜e2 35 g5!**

Fixing h7 as a weakness.

**35...♖e7 36 ♜b4+ ♖e8 37 a4 ♜d1 38 a5! ♜e2 39 ♜c6 ♖d8 40 ♜d5 ♖e8 41 ♜c6 ♖d8**



**Exercise:** What should White play now? (difficulty level 2)

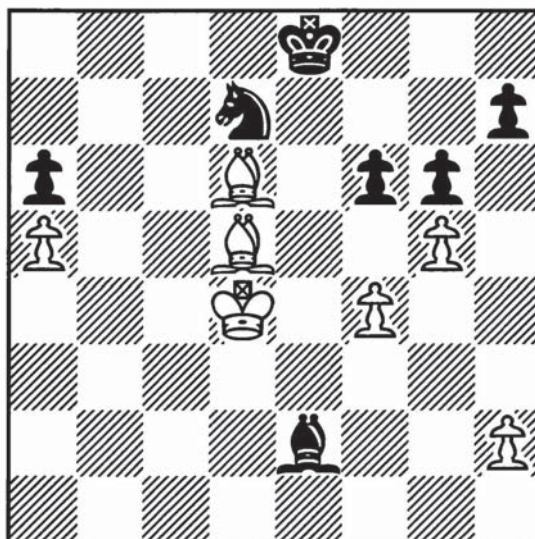
*Joel:* White has the superior light-squared bishop, so exchanging his dark-squared bishop for the black knight would leave him with a decisive advantage; therefore, I thought about 42 ♜c5 (threatening 43 ♜b6+). If 42...♞xc5 43 ♖xc5 (heading to b6) 43...♖c7 then 44 ♜e8 and White wins the f7-pawn; or 42...♖c7 43 ♜a4 ♖d8 44 ♖d5 and White's king invades.

*Boris:* White's position is winning, since Black's knight doesn't have any squares. The



pawns on a5 and g5 keep it out of f6 and b6, while the move 42 ♖d6 (as played in the game) takes away its last two squares (b8 and f8). Your move wasn't bad, though after 42...♔c7 White has to play 43 ♖d5, and not 43 ♖a4 as you recommended because Black then has 43...♗g4 and 44...♗e6. But why allow Black to move at all? After 42 ♖d6, he is completely paralyzed.

**42 ♖d6! ♔e8 43 ♖d5 f6**



*Exercise:* What is White's winning plan? (difficulty level 2)

**Joel:** White's king needs to infiltrate the black camp. So I thought of 44 ♖g2, so that the king can enter through d5, not worrying about checks from Black's light-squared bishop.

**Boris:** Bronstein wrote that *one of the advantages for the side with the two bishops is that you can exchange one of them at the optimum moment*. Your plan does not guarantee penetration with the king: after ♖d5, Black has ...♗b5, and if White plays ♗e6, Black has ...♗c4+. Of course, in this position, White has more than one way to win.

In the case of 43...♗f1, White's winning plan would be the same: 44 ♖c4! ♗xc4 45 ♗xc4 ♗d8 46 ♗d5 ♗c8 47 ♗c6.

**44 ♖c4! ♗xc4 45 ♗xc4 fxg5 1-0**

Black resigned because after 46...♗f7 47 ♗d5, he is in zugzwang.

In the following game two bishops struggle against two knights. It is more difficult to demonstrate the superiority of the bishop pair because Black has a lot of activity for his pieces.

Game 2  
B.Gulko-E.Vasiukov  
Moscow Championship 1983  
English Opening

**1 c4 e5 2 g3**

More common is 2  $\text{d}c3$ . Usually in the opening we try to avoid particular variations, but *when we avoid one variation we give our opponent an additional opportunity to play others*. With 2 g3, White avoids lines in which Black develops his bishop to b4, but instead Black has the opportunity to play an early ...c7-c6 as in this game.

**2... $\text{d}f6$**

I myself played 2...c6 against Larsen, which could have transposed to my game with Vasiukov but went in a different direction: 3  $\text{d}f3$  e4 4  $\text{d}d4$  d5 5 cxd5  $\text{W}xd5$  6  $\text{d}b3$   $\text{d}f6$  7  $\text{d}c3$   $\text{W}h5$  8 d3?! (8 h3 was better, as in the main game) 8...exd3 9  $\text{W}xd3$   $\text{d}a6$ ! 10  $\text{d}d4$   $\text{d}b4$ ! 11  $\text{W}e3$ +  $\text{e}7$  12 a3  $\text{d}bd5$  and Black obtained the initiative in B.Larsen-B.Gulko, Hastings 1988/89.

**3  $\text{e}g2$  c6 4  $\text{d}f3$ !**

In those years, 4  $\text{d}f3$  was White's main hope for an advantage, but practice has shown that this move does not create problems for Black. Today, 4 d4!? is considered to be more challenging.

**4...e4 5  $\text{d}d4$  d5 6 cxd5  $\text{W}xd5$ ! 7  $\text{d}b3$**

The move 6... $\text{W}xd5$  was first introduced in K.Langeweg-M.Botvinnik, Wijk aan Zee 1969, which continued 7  $\text{d}c2$   $\text{W}h5$ ! 8 h3  $\text{W}g6$ ! 9 b3  $\text{e}c5$  and Black already obtained the advantage. Since that game 7  $\text{d}b3$  has become the main line. Botvinnik's idea to take on d5 with the queen demonstrates the advantage of Black's position compared to the Keres Variation (2  $\text{d}c3$   $\text{d}f6$  3 g3 c6), where White has a knight on c3 instead of a bishop on g2. In that case, Black would be forced to recapture on d5 with a pawn and White's prospects are better.

**7... $\text{W}h5$  8 h3**

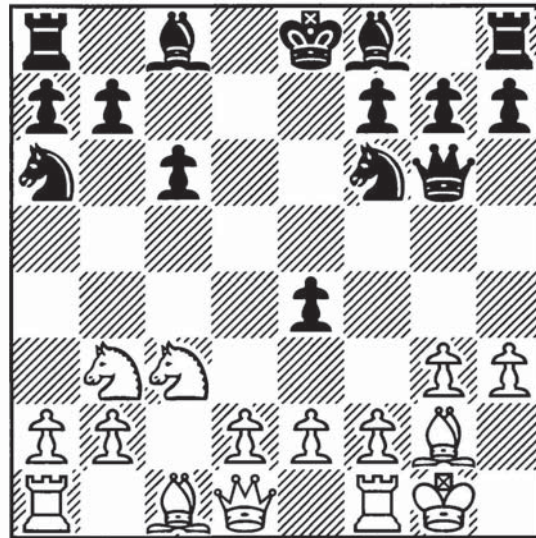
Igor Zaitsev's 8  $\text{W}c2$ ?! doesn't work because of 8... $\text{d}a6$ ! 9  $\text{d}c3$   $\text{d}b4$  10  $\text{W}b1$   $\text{e}h3$ , intending 11  $\text{e}xe4$   $\text{d}xe4$  12  $\text{W}xe4$ +  $\text{e}7$  and White is defenseless. Nor is 8 d3 good for White because of 8... $\text{e}h3$ !, so he has to waste a tempo with the cautious 8 h3.

**8... $\text{d}a6$ !**

In the famous game B.Larsen-V.Korchnoi, Leningrad Interzonal 1973, play continued 8... $\text{W}g6$  9  $\text{d}c3$   $\text{d}bd7$  10  $\text{W}c2$  e3 11  $\text{W}xg6$  exf2+ 12  $\text{e}xf2$  hxg6 and Black won in excellent style. In my estimation, however, the endgame which arose is favorable to White. The novelty played by my opponent was much stronger.

**9  $\text{d}c3$   $\text{W}g6$  10 0-0**

White didn't have time for 10  $\text{W}c2$ ? because of 10... $\text{d}b4$  11  $\text{W}b1$  e3! and he is in trouble.



**Exercise:** Which plan looks most promising for Black here? (difficulty level 4)

**Joel:** Black's strongpoint is the pawn on e4, so I would like to support that as much as possible while also continuing to develop my pieces and get castled (kingside). I would like to put my rooks on the e- and d-files, my light-squared bishop on e6, and transfer my dark-squared bishop to the queenside where it stares at White's king. I guess I would start with 10...♙d6 then follow up by ...0-0, ...♖fe8, ...♙e6, and ...♗ad8.

**Boris:** You're right that the e4-pawn gives Black good opportunities and your plan is similar to Vasiukov's. However, after your suggestion 10...♙d6, or Vasiukov's move in the game (10...♙b4), White is able to exchange the e4-pawn and the advantages associated with it will disappear.

For Black, it was better to use the moment when the e4-pawn was still on the board and try 10...h5! with the threat of 11...h4 12 g4 ♙xg4 13 hxg4 h3 and wins. As a result White has to force the play with 11 ♖c2 ♘c5 12 ♘xc5 ♙xc5, when Black has the initiative; for example, 13 e3 (13 ♘b5? is met by 13...♙xf2+, or if 13 ♘xe4 ♘xe4 14 ♖xe4+ ♖xe4 15 ♙xe4 ♙xh3 16 ♙g2 ♙f5, Black can develop the initiative on the kingside in spite of the exchange of queens) 13...♙f5 14 ♘b5 0-0 15 ♖xc5 cxb5 16 ♖xb5 h4! and if 17 g4 then 17...♘xg4 18 hxg4 ♙xg4 and Black's attack can hardly be stopped.

The immediate 10...♘c5?! was less promising, as after 11 d4! exd3 12 ♙e3! ♘xb3 13 ♖xb3 dxe2?! 14 ♘xe2 ♙e7 15 ♘f4 ♖f5 16 ♗fe1 0-0 17 ♗ad1, White has a strong initiative for the pawn.

**10...♙b4!? 11 d3!**

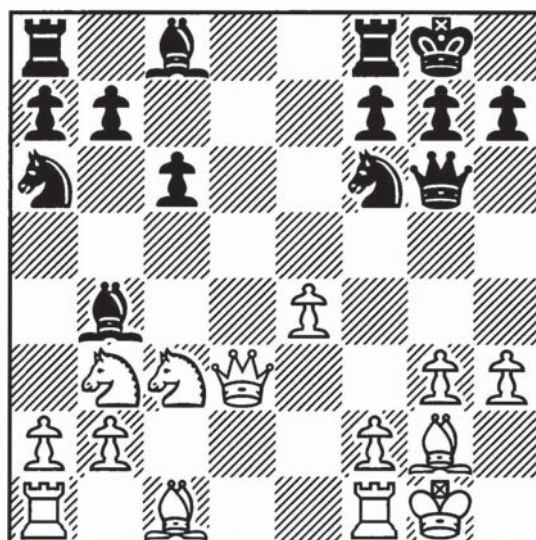
After 11 ♖c2 ♙xc3 12 dxc3 e3, a harmless endgame would arise for Black.

**Joel:** Why is that harmless? After 13 ♖xg6, White has the bishop pair.

**Boris:** You're right, but after 13...exf2+, Black would take back on g6 with the h-pawn and have the superior pawn structure, which would compensate for White's bishop pair.



**11...exd3 12 e4 O-O 13 ♖xd3**



**13...♗xc3!?**

After this an unclear position arises with a lot of possibilities. Instead of the text, Black could have created more problems with 13...♖e8!? 14 ♖d1 ♗xc3 (winning the pawn is not appealing for Black because after 14...♗e6?! 15 ♗e3 ♗xb3 16 axb3 ♗xc3 17 bxc3 ♘xe4 18 ♖a5!, White would have strong compensation) 15 bxc3 h6 16 ♗f4 (16 ♖e1? would be a mistake due to 16...♗f5) 16...♘xe4 17 ♖e1 f5 and White has compensation for the pawn but no more than that.

**14 bxc3 ♖e8 15 ♗d2!?**

The pawn sacrifice with 15 ♖e1!? deserved attention: 15...♗e6 (Black doesn't have 15...♗f5? here since 16 exf5! ♖xe1+ 17 ♖h2 ♗h5 18 ♗f3 wins – in the previous note the queen could retreat to h7) 16 g4 ♗xb3 (16...♗d5 wouldn't make much sense after 17 f3) 17 axb3 ♘c5 18 ♗c2 ♘cxe4 19 f4! with a tense position.

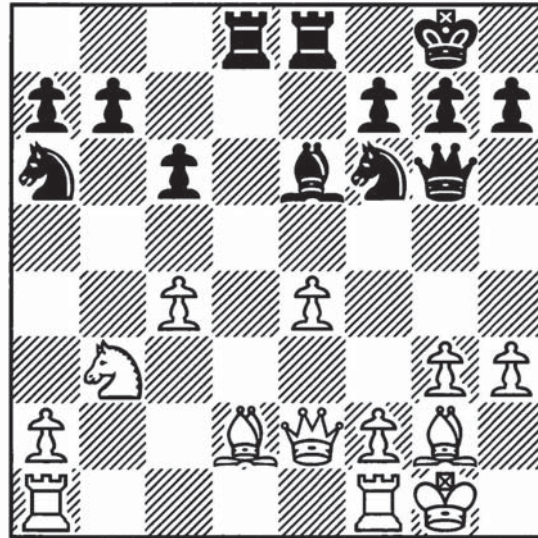
**15...♗e6!**

Of course 15...♘xe4? is a blunder due to 16 ♗xe4 ♗xe4 17 ♖ae1 and wins.

**16 c4! ♖ad8 17 ♗e2!?**

17 ♗c2 would allow Black to solve his problems with 17...b5; e.g. 18 cxb5 cxb5 19 ♖fe1 ♗d5 20 f3 ♗c4 with equality.





**Exercise:** What is the best continuation for Black here? (difficulty level 6)

*Joel:* I would play 17...♙c8, intending to defend against e4-e5 with ...♘d7, followed by bringing a knight to d3.

*Boris:* After your suggestion 17...♙c8?! 18 e5 ♘d7, White has 19 f4! (not 19 ♙c3 ♘xe5 20 ♙xe5 f6 21 ♚e3 ♜xe5 22 ♚xa7, when White would have to defend an inferior position) 19...♘dc5 (19...♚xg3?! 20 ♙e1 ♚g6 21 ♙h4 is bad for Black) 20 ♙e3 and White's position is preferable because of the bishop pair and strong central pawns.

Instead, Black has the fantastic combination 17...♘xe4!!, which eliminates any difficulties:

a) 18 ♙xe4 ♙xh3 19 ♙xg6 ♜xe2 20 ♙h5 ♙xf1 21 ♙f4 ♜c2 22 ♙xf1 ♜xc4 and Black has some advantage in the endgame.

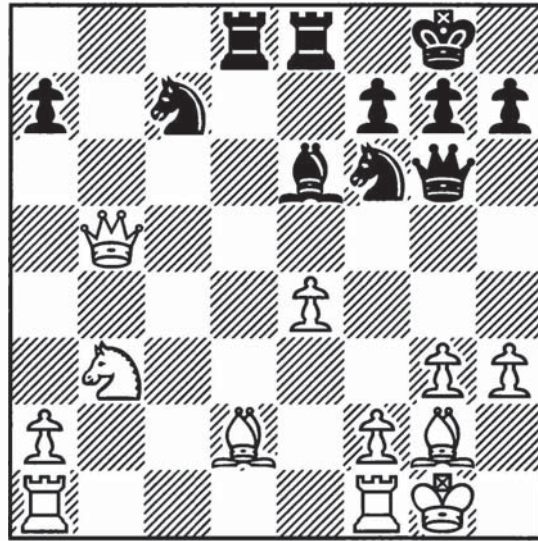
b) 18 ♚xe4 ♚xe4 19 ♙xe4 ♙xc4 20 ♜fc1 ♜xe4 21 f3 ♙xb3 22 fxe4 ♜xd2 23 axb3 ♙f8 is better for Black as well.

c) Only 18 ♙a5! allows White to reach an equal endgame: 18...b6 19 ♚xe4 ♚xe4 20 ♙xe4 ♙xc4 21 ♜fe1 bxa5 22 ♘xa5 ♙e6 23 ♘xc6 ♜d2 and a draw is obvious.

In the game, Vasiukov chose to sacrifice a pawn, hoping to obtain the initiative.

**17...b5?! 18 cxb5 cxb5 19 ♚xb5 ♘c7**

Not 19...♘xe4? 20 ♙a5 and White is winning.



**Exercise:** Where would you move White's queen? (difficulty level 3)

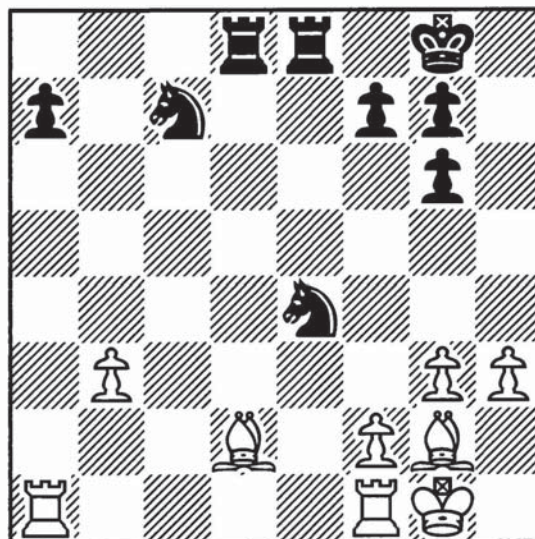
**Joel:** Black threatens ...♙xb3 and ...♖xd2, so White needs to defend against this threat. 20 ♖e2 doesn't work because of 20...♙xb3 21 axb3 ♘xe4, when Black has equal material and the initiative. So I would play 20 ♖a5, which stays in touch with d2, and threatens to win material with either ♖xc7 or ♖xa7.

**Boris:** Your 20 ♖a5 can be met by 20...♘xe4 21 ♖fe1 ♘xd2 22 ♘xd2 ♖f5, when Black's pieces are active and he is not worse. We discussed at the beginning of this section that *the advantage of the bishop pair becomes more significant the more pieces are exchanged*, because others factors disappear. Therefore, the most logical course is to exchange queens and transpose to an endgame.

**20 ♖g5!**

20 ♖c6 could lead to the same position after 20...♙xb3 21 axb3 ♘xe4 22 ♖xg6 etc.

**20...♙xb3 21 axb3 ♘xe4 22 ♖xg6 hxg6**



**Exercise:** What should White play now? (difficulty level 2)

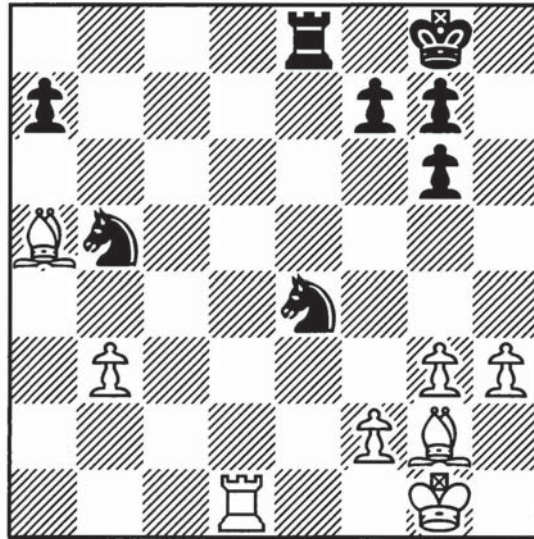
*Joel:* I learned my lesson from the previous game that the advantage of the two bishops grows in the endgame, so giving up the bishop pair to win the a-pawn seems weak to me, especially after 23 ♖xe4 ♜xe4 24 ♜xa7 ♘b5, when Black's pieces are very active. Instead, I think putting more pressure on the a-pawn with 23 ♙e3 is good. This move prevents the knight on e4 from pressuring the b3-pawn and forces Black to play 23...a6, when 24 ♙b6 looks good.

*Boris:* After 23 ♙e4 ♜xd2 (stronger than 23...♜xe4, when White would obtain the advantage after either 24 ♙e3 or 24 ♙a5) 24 ♜xa7 ♜xe4 25 ♜xc7 ♜ee2, the rook endgame is completely drawish because White's rook cannot leave the f1-square. Your suggestion 23 ♙e3 fails to the simple tactic 23...♘xg3.

White's task is to extinguish the activity of Black's pieces. *One of the advantages of bishops is their ability to pin the opponent's pieces.* The main topic of this endgame is pinning and restricting the movement of Black's pieces.

**23 ♙a5! ♜d7 24 ♜ad1 ♜xd1 25 ♜xd1 ♘b5**





**Exercise:** What to play? (difficulty level 2)

*Joel:* Well, getting rid of the rooks seems like a good idea in principle, since that would leave White with bishops versus knights on an open board and pawns on both sides, so I would play 26 ♖d8.

*Boris:* The bishop pair is stronger against bishop and knight than it is against two knights because two knights can coordinate better than knight and bishop. What White has to do is find the best squares for his pieces. The bishop on g2 doesn't have any prospects because the knight on e4 restricts it and the a8-h1 diagonal is otherwise empty.

*Joel:* I still don't understand why you keep the rooks on the board.

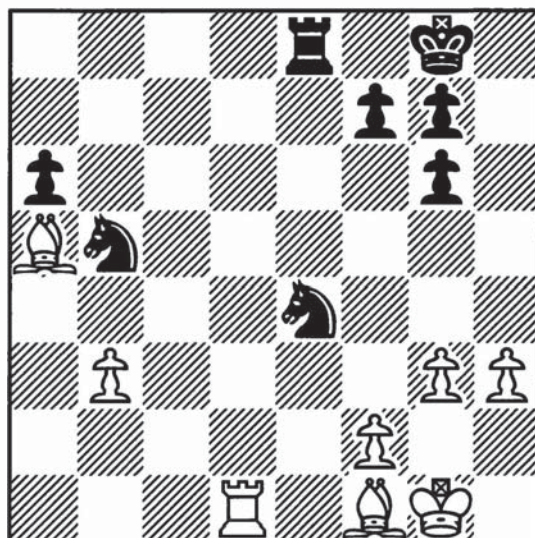
*Boris:* Because White's rook on d1 is stronger than Black's rook on e8. *It is not a good idea to exchange better pieces for worse pieces; there is no such thing as an equal exchange.*

**26 ♕f1!**

The move 26 ♖d7 looks active, but after 26...a6 White would have to defend against ...♘c5, forking rook and pawn.

**26...a6**

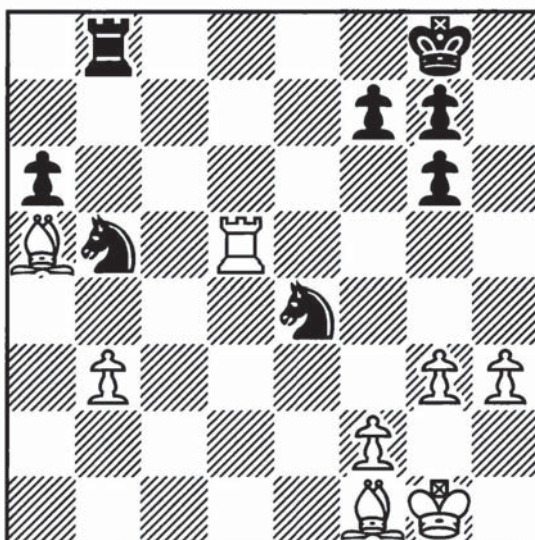




**Exercise:** What to play now? (difficulty level 3)

*Boris:* As we've said, White's task is to tie up Black's pieces and improve the position of his own. Black's position is solid, but he doesn't have active opportunities.

**27 ♖d5! ♜b8**



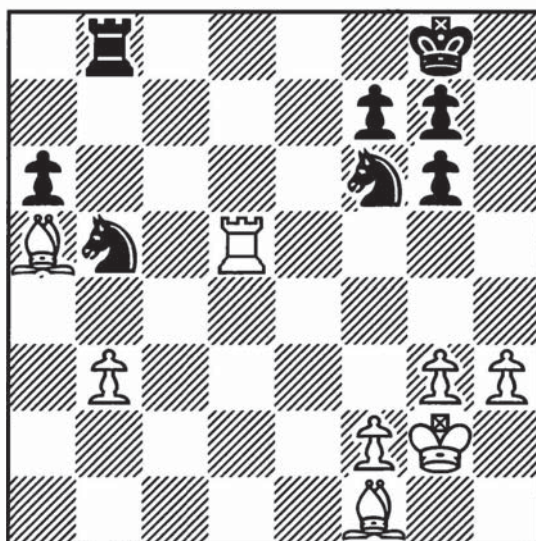
**Exercise:** What should White play here? (difficulty level 3)

*Joel:* I guess I would play 28 ♙c4, with the idea of 28...♘d6 29 ♙c7 or 28...♗bc3 29 ♖d7, hitting f7.

*Boris:* Your suggestion is not bad, but it's better if you *do not give your opponent opportunities for counterplay*. In the case of 28 ♙c4, Black has 28...♗a3 and it's not easy for White

to avoid exchanging minor pieces or pawns. I think it's important to improve the position of the white king, since Black's pieces still do not have active possibilities.

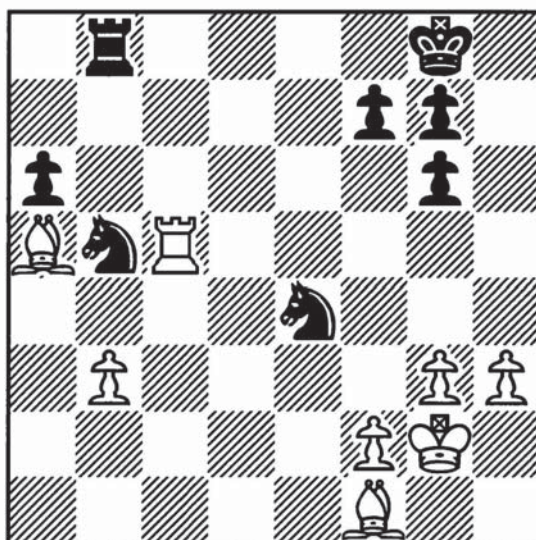
28 ♔g2! ♖f6 29 ♜d1 ♘e4 30 ♜d5 ♖f6



**Exercise:** How can you continue to improve the position of White's pieces? (difficulty level 3)

*Boris:* White's rook can crawl into Black's camp by way of ♜c5-c6.

31 ♜c5! ♘e4



**Exercise:** Where should White move his rook? (difficulty level 3)

*Joel:* I would play 32 ♜c6 here, attacking a6.



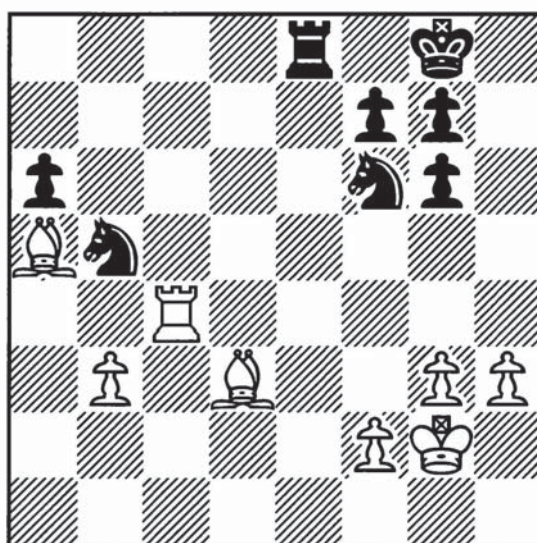
**Boris:** When you play against knights you have to be very careful to guard against forks. After 32 ♖c6, simply 32...♘d4 is an immediate draw.

**32 ♖c6! ♖e8**

In the case of 32...♘bd6 33 ♖b4 ♖xb4 34 ♙xb4 ♘b5 35 ♔f3, White's king is poised to hunt down the a6-pawn. Now you can see the significance of White's 28th move; it shortens his path to the queenside.

**33 ♙d3 ♘f6**

White has accomplished part of his plan. His rook, bishop and king are now more active, while Black's e4-knight has been pushed back to the f6-square again.



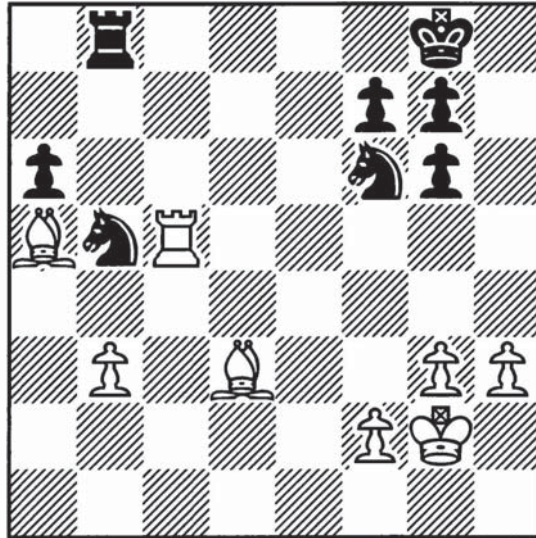
**Exercise:** What should White do next? (difficulty level 3)

**Joel:** I would play 34 ♖c6.

**Boris:** White still has to be very careful not to give Black's knights the opportunity to demonstrate their jumping skills. After 34 ♖c6 ♘d4 35 ♖b6 ♘d7!, White cannot avoid the exchange of pawns on the queenside. Instead, he must continue to tie the knights down.

**34 ♖c5! ♖b8**





**Exercise:** What should White play here? (difficulty level 3)

**Boris:** Now White has the chance to put pressure on f7 and support the very important b3-pawn while keeping the knights at bay.

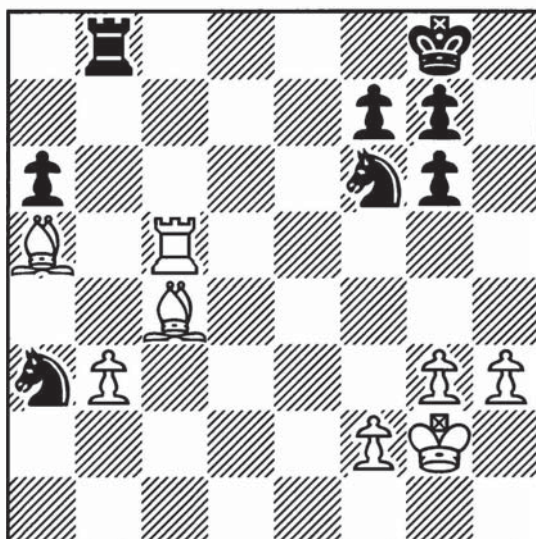
**35 ♖c4!**

Covering the pawn with 35 b4 was worse, as after 35...♞d7 36 ♚c1 ♞e5 37 ♜f1 g5!, Black has practically equalized. White's bishops are no longer active and Black's knights have good squares.

**Joel:** What does 37...g5 accomplish?

**Boris:** It supports the knight by discouraging f2-f4, since after an exchange of pawns on f4, White will have created weaknesses for himself.

**35...♞a3!**



**Exercise:** What to play now? (difficulty level 4)

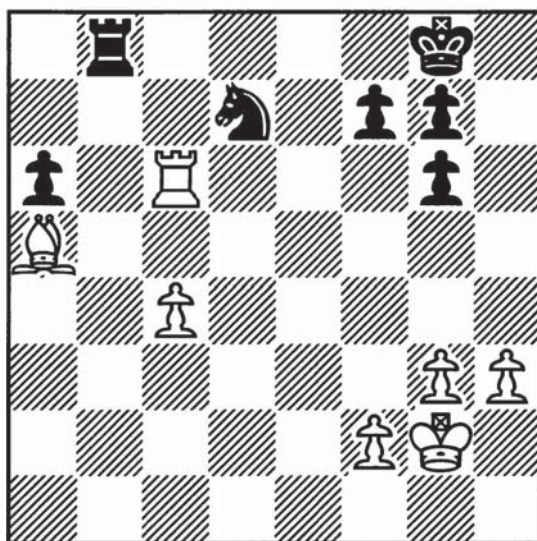
**Boris:** White is ready to trade one of his bishops for another advantage, namely an active rook and passed pawn.

**36 ♖c6!**

The attractive-looking alternative 36 ♖xa6 ♜xb3 37 ♜c8+ ♔h7 38 ♜f8 would allow Black to demonstrate the potential of his knights: 38...♞c2! (threatening to skewer the bishops with ...♜a3) 39 ♖c4 ♜a3 40 ♖d8 ♞d7 41 ♜e8 ♜a8 42 ♖xf7 ♞f6 43 ♜f8 ♞e1+! (much worse is 43...♞d7 44 ♖g8+ ♔h8 45 ♜e8 ♞f6 46 ♖d5+ ♞xe8 47 ♖xa8 and White has to win) 44 ♔f1 ♞f3 45 ♖e7 ♜a1+ 46 ♔e2 ♞g1+ and Black regains his pawn with equality.

**36...♞xc4 37 bxc4 ♞d7?!**

The passive defense 37...♜a8!? was more stubborn, although 38 ♜c7! (after 38 c5? ♔f8 39 ♜c7 ♞d5! 40 ♜d7 ♞f6 41 ♜b7 ♜c8 42 ♖c7 ♞e4! 43 c6 ♔e8, Black constructs a sufficient defense) 38...♔f8 39 ♖b4+ ♔g8 40 ♖a3 a5 41 c5 ♞d5 42 ♜b7 still leaves White with a big advantage.



**Exercise:** What should White play? (difficulty level 3)

**Boris:** White has to use his trumps and push the passed pawn.

**38 c5!**

38 ♜xa6? would have been a terrible mistake, due to 38...♜c8 39 ♜a7 ♞e5 and Black escapes.

**38...♜b5**

Not better was 38...♔f8 39 ♖c7 ♜a8 40 ♖d6+ ♔e8 (moving the king away from the center with 40...♔g8 was no better, as after 41 ♔f3 a5 42 ♜c7 ♞f6 43 ♜b7, Black would be defenseless) 41 ♜c7 and Black would lose after c5-c6.

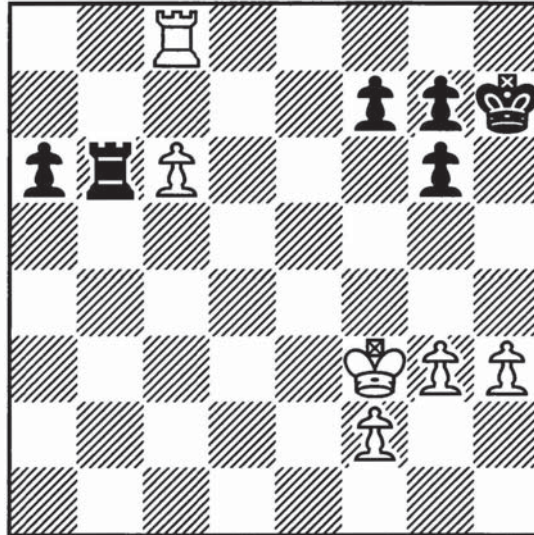
Joel: That doesn't look so straightforward after something like 41...♖d8.

Boris: It's tactical. White plays 42 c6 ♘f6 43 ♜e7+ ♔f8 44 c7 ♜c8 45 ♜e1+ ♔g8 46 ♜b1 ♘e8 47 ♙f4 ♘xc7 48 ♜c1, winning.

**39 ♜c8+ ♔h7 40 c6 ♘b6**

After 40...♘f6 41 ♜f8 ♜xa5 42 c7 ♜c5 43 c8♖, White wins easily.

**41 ♙xb6 ♜xb6 42 ♔f3**



Boris: White has exchanged both his bishops for Black's knights to reach a winning rook endgame.

**42...a5**

After 42...♜b4 43 ♔e3 a5 (or 43...♜c4 44 ♔d3 ♜c1 45 ♔d4) 44 ♔d3 a4 45 ♜a8, Black is defenseless.

**43 ♔e4 a4 1-0**

My opponent resigned without waiting for 44 ♔d5 ♜a6 45 c7 ♜a5+ (if 45...a3 then 46 ♜h8+ wins) 46 ♔c6 a3 47 ♜d8 a2 48 c8♖ a1♖ 49 ♜h8 mate.

We can see that two bishops in the endgame is a significant advantage – albeit one that is more significant in the struggle against bishop and knight, rather than two knights, because knights can coordinate their efforts better. *One of the practical uses of the bishop pair is that you can exchange them for other advantages; that is, convert one advantage into another, as we saw in this game.* It is significant as well that: *when one bishop is exchanged, you can reach a bishop versus knight endgame in which the bishop can dominate the knight.*



## Chapter Two

# The Theory of Weak Squares

*Boris:* Many years ago Petrosian wrote about Henrique Mecking, who won two Interzonal tournaments and played two tough candidate matches with Korchnoi and Polugaevsky, that he would not reach the highest level in chess because he did not understand the theory of weak squares. It is important, therefore, for a chess player to learn and understand this topic which we will cover in the next three games. Weak squares are usually those which cannot be protected by pawns and there is no bishop to defend them. This will become clearer when we look at my games.

*Joel:* It seems hard to believe that a player of such a high caliber didn't understand the theory of weak squares.

*Boris:* First of all, it is just Petrosian's opinion. Secondly, his comments were based on three games that Petrosian won against Mecking. All of these games are excellent examples of the theory of weak squares; i.e. when there is a weakness of one square of one color in the enemy camp. Of course, Petrosian was one of the greatest specialists in creating and exploiting this type of weakness.

The clearest case of using weak squares of one color is in opposite-colored bishop middlegames. In the endgame, such positions are often drawn, even when two pawns down, but in the middlegame a weakness of a square of one color can be lethal because the opposing bishop cannot protect it.

### Game 3 B.Gulko-A.Shabalov Curacao 2003 Slav Defense

1 d4 d5 2 c4 c6 3 cxd5 cxd5 4 ♘f3 ♘c6 5 ♘c3 ♘f6 6 ♙f4 a6 7 ♖c1

**Boris:** After 7 e3 ♖g4, Black reaches equality, so the text move is a useful waiting move anticipating Black's ...♗g4.

**Joel:** And what would happen in this case?

**Boris:** After 7 ♖c1 ♗g4, White would have the very profitable 8 ♘e5.

**Joel:** Ah, because you haven't moved the e-pawn, the knight is not pinned.

**Boris:** Right.

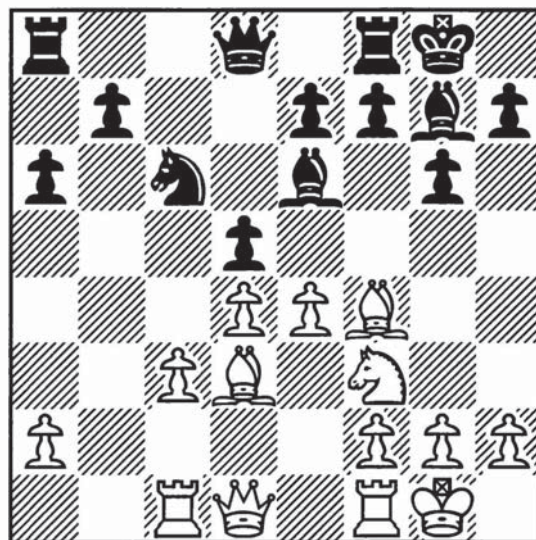
**7...♗e4 8 e3 ♘xc3 9 bxc3 g6 10 ♗d3**

**Boris:** Because White's bishop on f4 is cut off from the other side of the board, the natural 10 c4 is not good, since Black has 10...e5! 11 dxe5 ♗b4+ 12 ♘d2 d4! with an unpleasant initiative.

**10...♗g7 11 0-0 0-0 12 e4!**

A new plan in this position. A young Kramnik won a brilliant game after 12 c4 dxc4 13 ♗xc4 ♗f5 14 ♖e2 ♖c8 with a good position for Black, L.Portisch-V.Kramnik, Biel Interzonal 1993.

**12...♗e6**



**Exercise:** Is the natural 13 ♗g5 good for White? (difficulty level 2)

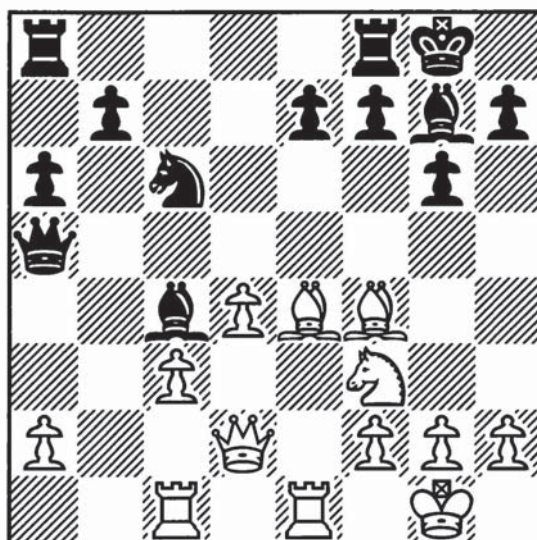
**13 ♖d2**

White avoids a trap: 13 ♗g5? dxe4 14 ♗xe6? (in another of Shabalov's games, his opponent realized the trap too late and played 14 ♗xe4 ♗xa2 15 ♗xc6 bxc6 16 ♖a4 ♖d5, but Black is already better, N.Paikidze-A.Shabalov, Bridgetown 2009) 14...fxe6 and suddenly both white bishops are hanging.

**13...dxe4 14 ♗xe4 ♗c4 15 ♖fe1 ♖a5**

Trying to create counterplay.

In the case of 15...♖c8 16 h4 or 16 ♗h6, White would put pressure on Black's kingside.



**Exercise:** Find a promising way for White. (difficulty level 5)

**Joel:** What's wrong with 16 ♖xc6 bxc6 17 ♜xe7 - ? If 17...♙xa2 then 18 ♜ca1 pins the bishop, and if 17...♙d5 or 17...♙e6 (trying to trap the rook) then 18 ♜eb7 followed by ♜cb1, taking control of the c-file.

**Boris:** White loses the a-pawn after 17...♙xa2, when material will be equal and Black's a-pawn could be dangerous, while his light-squared bishop could become powerful supporting the a-pawn's advance.

Here White has to solve one of the most difficult problems in chess: *Whether to change the character of the game by playing dynamically or to improve his position step by step.*

To solve this problem we use both calculation and intuition. After the quiet move played in the game, Black's position is reasonable. Much stronger was the dynamic 16 ♜b1! ♙d5 17 ♜d3! (I only considered 17 c4 ♜xd2 18 ♙xd2 ♙xe4 19 ♜xe4 f5 20 ♜e6 ♜xd4 or 17 ♜xb7 ♙xe4 18 ♜xe4 ♜d5 19 ♜d3 ♜xd4 with an equal position in both cases) 17...♙xe4 18 ♜xe4 ♜xc3 19 ♜ec1 ♜a3 20 ♜xb7 and Black is in serious trouble.

**16 ♜c2 ♜fe8 17 ♙xc6!**

**Joel:** There you go again. That's the move I recommended one move before and it was wrong, and now you go ahead and play it.

**Boris:** Yes, but here I have protected the a2-pawn, and since I am not playing to win the e7-pawn, Black's light-squared bishop does not become active and the position does not become dynamic. With this sudden exchange White hopes to create a position with opposite-colored bishops, when the weakness of the dark squares around the king becomes the decisive factor. Shabalov didn't realize the danger of this plan, believing that the presence of opposite-colored bishops ensured the safety of his position, but this is only true in the endgame. *In the middlegame, the presence of opposite-colored bishops can lead to dangerous attacks, because one of the color complexes will be weak and indefensible.*



Instead, the position after 17 ♖h6 ♜ac8 would be approximately equal. The move I played in the game is White's best chance to reach an advantage.

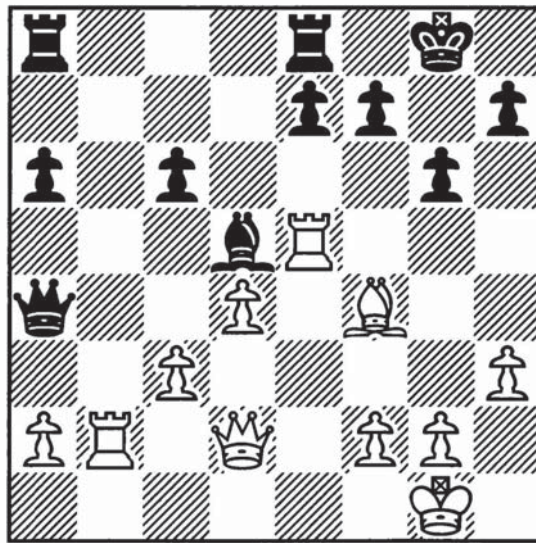
**17...bxc6 18 ♘e5 ♙xe5**

Other possibilities also had their drawbacks: 18...♙d5 19 c4 ♜xd2 20 ♙xd2 ♙xe5 21 cxd5 ♙xd4 22 dxc6 with a big advantage in the endgame; or 18...♜d5 19 ♘xc4 ♜xc4 20 ♜e2 ♜xe2 21 ♜cxe2 e6 22 ♜b1 and White controls the important b-file.

**19 ♙xe5 ♜a4 20 ♜b2 ♙d5**

A logical move. 20...♜ab8 21 ♜xe7 was bad for Black, while in the case of 20...♜eb8 21 h4, White maintains the initiative.

**21 h3!**



**21...a5?**

Now we see that Black does not feel the danger inherent in his position. He should change the character of the struggle with 21...f6! 22 ♜e2 c5! (after the quiet 22...♜a7 23 ♜b4 ♜a5 24 ♜b2, White again controls the important b-file) 23 dxc5 ♜c6 24 ♜e3 ♙xg2 25 ♜b6 ♜f3 26 ♜e6, when White's passed pawn on the c-file promises him some chances in the endgame. Nevertheless, this course was to be preferred to the game continuation.

**22 ♜e3!**

*Joel:* Why do you consider this such a good move?

*Boris:* Now Black hardly has a defense because of the weakness of his dark squares. It is exactly the point I want to make with this game. The bishop on d5 cannot help Black's defense. Just half a move earlier the position looked as if it were equal, but now Black is defenseless. Such a sudden metamorphosis is characteristic of opposite-colored bishop middlegames.

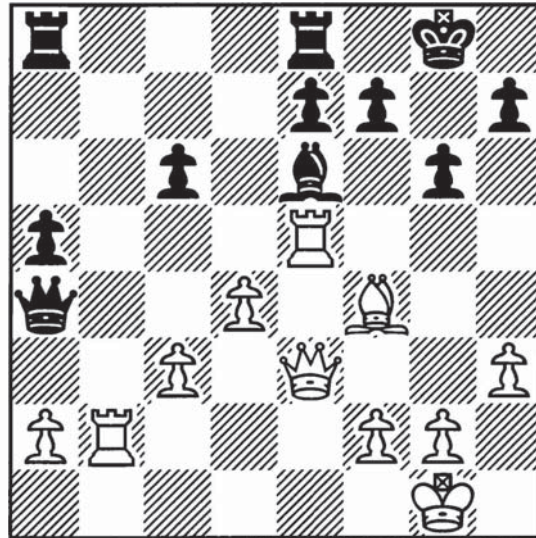
*Joel:* How did 22 ♜e3 help you accomplish that metamorphosis?

*Boris:* With 22 ♜e3 White takes the initiative, attacking e7 and creating the possibility of the queen coming to e5 when the dark squares around Black's king become fatally weak. *The initiative in such opposite-colored bishop middlegames is often impossible to extinguish.*

## 22...♔a3

22...♖a7 would not dampen White's initiative after 23 ♗g5 ♔a3 24 ♖e2, since if 24...♔f8 25 ♗f6! wins.

Nor can Black block the e-file with 22...♗e6.

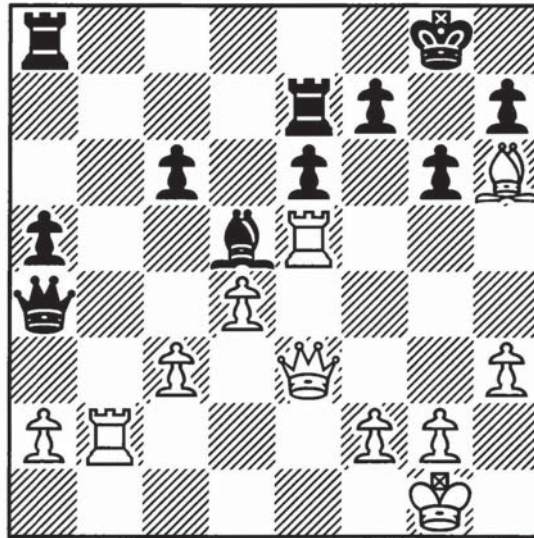


**Exercise:** Why not? What does White play? (difficulty level 2)

**Joel:** 23 ♖xe6 looks strong. After 23...fxe6 24 ♔xe6+, followed by ♗e5 or ♗g5, White has a pawn and an attack on the king for the exchange.

**Boris:** Very good! You saw the dark square weaknesses around Black's king. Bronstein wrote: *A weakness in the squares of one color becomes the weakness of pieces placed on squares of the other color.* So here White's dark square attack transforms to an attack on the light squares after the move 22...♗e6. The only thing I would say about your variation is that, after 24...♔g7, you need to bring the other rook into the attack with either 25 ♖e2 or 25 ♖b7.

If instead 22...e6, then 23 ♗h6! (23 ♗g5 f5 would be a relief for Black) 23...♖e7 (23...♔a3 24 ♖b7 transposes to the game)

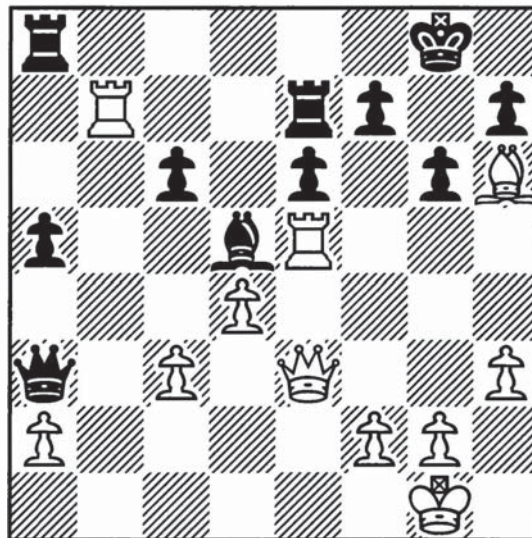


**Exercise:** And now what? (difficulty level 3)

White has to prepare the entry of his queen on the long diagonal while simultaneously preventing Black from moving the f-pawn. Thus 24 ♖f5! exf5 25 ♜xe7 ♜d1+ 26 ♔h2 ♜h5 27 ♕f4! and Black's king is defenseless against the coming assault.

**23 ♜b7 e6 24 ♕h6 f6**

Another possibility was 24...♜e7.

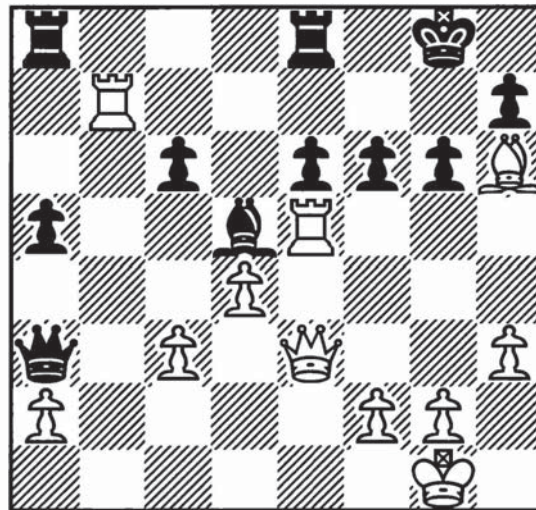


**Exercise:** What does White play then? (difficulty level 3)

**Boris:** White has a combination: 25 ♜xd5! (25 ♜f4 promises nothing after 25...f6) 25...♜xb7 (if 25...cxd5 then 26 ♜e5 f6 27 ♜b8+ ♔f7 28 ♜xa8! fxg5 29 ♜f8 with a beautiful



mate) 26 ♖e5 f6 27 ♖xe6+ ♔h8 28 ♖xf6+ ♔g8 29 ♖e6+ ♔h8 30 ♜d7 and White wins easily.  
Returning to the game:



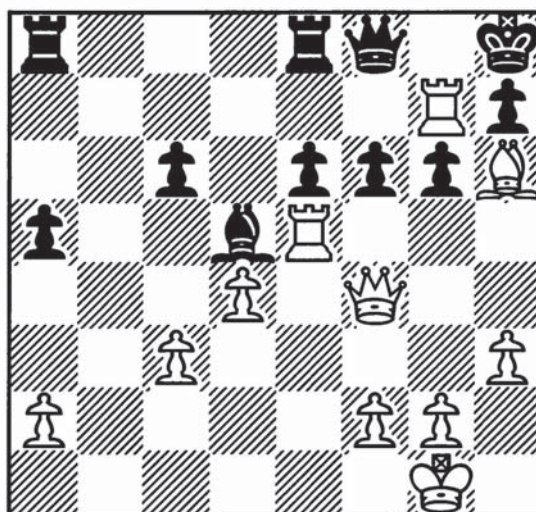
**Exercise:** What should White play here? (difficulty level 4)

**Joel:** 25 ♖g3 looks like a good move. I don't think the rook can be taken because the g7-square cannot be defended, while if Black does not take the rook then White has 26 ♜xd5, followed by 27 ♖c7, when the g7-square is again indefensible. Black will have to give up the queen or a whole rook to prevent mate.

**Boris:** White has to be precise. With either 25 ♖g3 or 25 ♖f4, he misses his chance because Black can play 25...♞e7, defending the seventh rank with equality.

**25 ♜g7+! ♔h8 26 ♖f4 ♖f8**

White mates quickly after 26...fxe5 27 ♖f6 or 26...♞f8 27 ♜xd5 exd5 28 ♖c7, but how about 26...♖f8 - ?



**Exercise:** What does White play then? (difficulty level 2)

Joel: 27 ♖xd5 followed by 28 ♜c7.

Boris: Interesting, but after 27 ♖xd5 exd5 28 ♜c7, Black has an immediate defense with ♜e1+ 29 ♔h2 ♜b8+ and White has to take perpetual check.

Joel: Wow! I didn't see that at all.

Boris: Yes. Instead, White has:

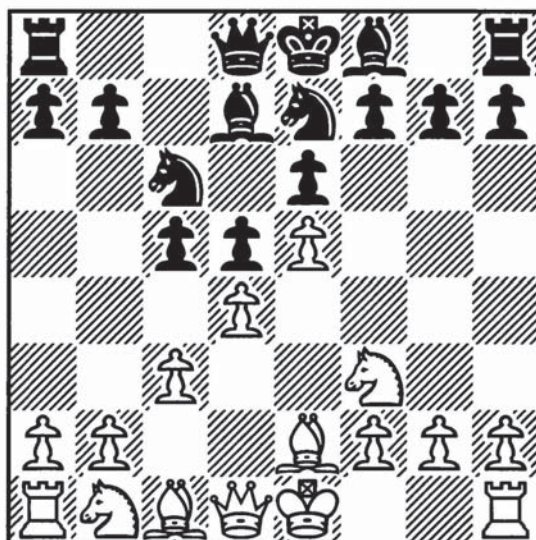
**27 ♖xg6! 1-0**

This move wins on the spot; whereas the natural 27 ♖xh7+ permits Black to fight on after 27...♔xh7 28 ♜xf8 ♖xf8.

White's attack in this game was short and unstoppable because of the weakness on the dark squares. It is important to be familiar with this mechanism in the middlegame. My opponent underestimated the dangers of the position with opposite-colored bishops and therefore lost quickly.

Game 4  
J. Benjamin-B. Gulko  
US Championship, Durango 1992  
French Defense

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 c5 4 c3 ♘c6 5 ♘f3 ♙d7 6 ♙e2 ♘ge7



7 ♘a3

My feeling is that 7 0-0 is more dangerous for Black.

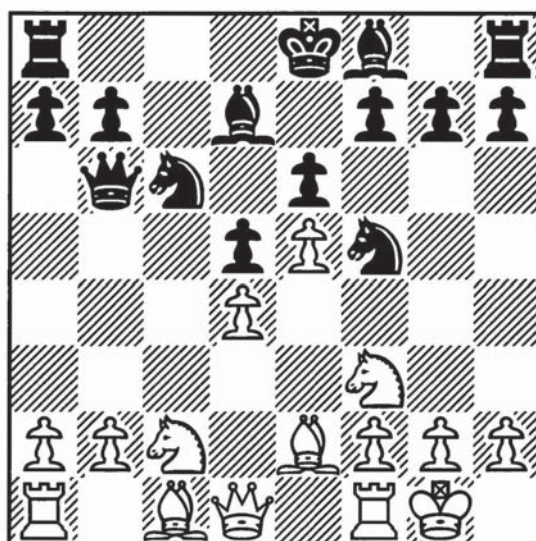
Joel: I remember you once showed me a game by Korchnoi where, after 7 0-0, he played 7...♘g6. In this game, after 7...cxd4 8 cxd4, you go 8...♘f5. What's the difference between



these two positions, and why in one do you play ...♖g6 and in the other ...♗f5 - ?

**Boris:** After 7 ♖a3, you can see that I immediately exchange on d4 because White's knight cannot develop to its best square. If White plays 7 0-0, exchanging on d4 is not good because White's knight can then develop to c3; while if Black responds to 7 0-0 with 7...♗f5 (without an exchange on d4) then 8 dxc5 ♕xc5 9 ♕d3, threatening to take on f5, is not attractive for Black either. In this line, White has chances for an advantage. This is the reason Korchnoi played 7...♗g6 after 7 0-0. The drawback to the knight being placed on g6 is that it can be harassed after g2-g3 and h2-h4.

**7...cxd4 8 cxd4 ♗f5 9 ♗c2 ♜b6 10 0-0**



### 10...a5

I introduced this move and played it a couple of times before this game. The idea is to prevent b2-b4.

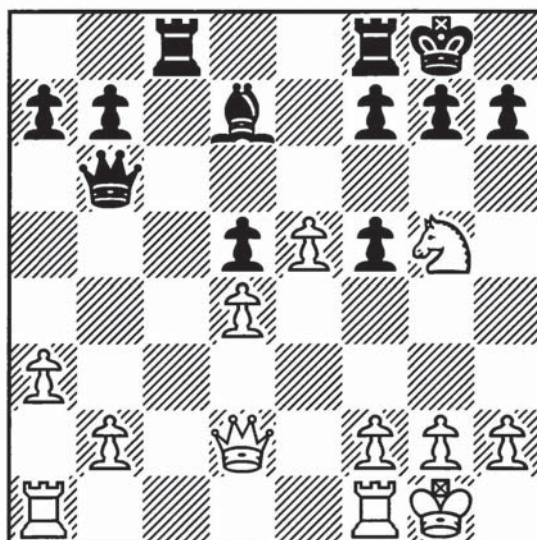
**Joel:** I would probably play 10...♕e7, so I can answer 11 g4 with 11...♗h4. That's a plan I've seen before in this kind of position. Did you consider it, or is it not good here?

**Boris:** I don't like 10...♕e7 for two reasons. The first is that, after 11 g4 ♗h4 12 ♗xh4 ♕xh4 13 f4, the bishop is poorly placed. The second is that, after 11 ♕d3, the d4-pawn is untouchable.

**Joel:** Why?

**Boris:** Let's consider my 1994 US Championship game with Benjamin when, instead of 10...♕e7, I played the more useful move 10...♞c8. That game continued 11 ♕d3 (the waiting move 11 ♖h1!, introduced by Grischuk, is probably best for White) 11...♗b4 (here you can see that Black cannot take the pawn because, after 11...♗fxd4 12 ♗fxd4 ♗xd4 13 ♕e3 ♕c5 14 b4, he loses a piece – this demonstrates the importance of my move 10...a5 because it prevents b2-b4; nevertheless, Black can obtain a good game without taking the pawn) 12 ♗xb4 ♕xb4 13 a3 ♕e7 14 ♕xf5 exf5 15 ♕g5 ♕xg5 16 ♗xg5 0-0 17 ♜d2





**Exercise:** Choose a move for Black. (difficulty level 2)  
Evaluate the position. (difficulty level 4)

*Joel:* Black has a good position as he has cleared the sixth rank for use by his major pieces. His light-squared bishop has good prospects too, but I'm not sure where to place it just yet. It could be needed to hold the center together or get active on the queenside. Black can also attack White's backward d-pawn with 17...♖c4 with gain of tempo, which is what I would play.

*Boris:* Your evaluation of the position is correct. Black is okay here. I don't see any profit in using the sixth rank though; Black's advantage comes from having control of the c-file and the ability to penetrate to the second rank. The move you offered (17...♖c4), is correct because it takes control of the c-file, prepares to double rooks and penetrate to the second rank. This makes the position almost winning. You're also right that Black's bishop is good because it has enough diagonal to work with.

The game continued 17...♖c4 18 ♘f3 ♗fc8 19 ♖ac1 ♕c7 20 ♗xc4 and in this position I accepted a draw offer from Benjamin. It was the last round and I was in clear first, one point ahead of Larry Christiansen. Nevertheless, I hesitated to accept the draw because the position is probably winning. My plan is straightforward: take on c4 with the queen, improve the position of my pawns by playing ...b7-b6, ...a7-a5, ...h7-h6 and, at last, play ...♕c2 when White can hardly avoid the exchange of queens. After this, the bishop will join the battle and Black has to win. All of this is possible because the position of White's knight on f3 cannot be significantly improved.

*Joel:* Why do you play ...b7-b6, ...a7-a5 and ...h7-h6 - ?

*Boris:* To deprive the white queen of any entry squares into my position.

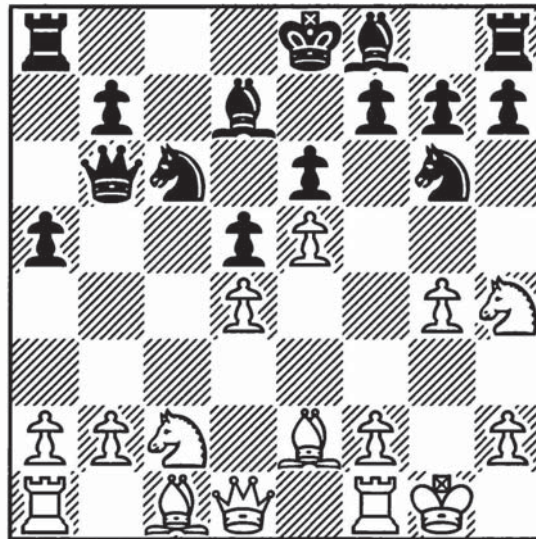
*Joel:* That's why he cannot in the end avoid the exchange of queens.

*Boris:* Yes.

# 11 g4

Here 11 ♖h1 was preferable, as played in A.Grischuk-M.Gurevich, Esbjerg 2000.

11...♟fe7 12 ♘h4 ♘g6



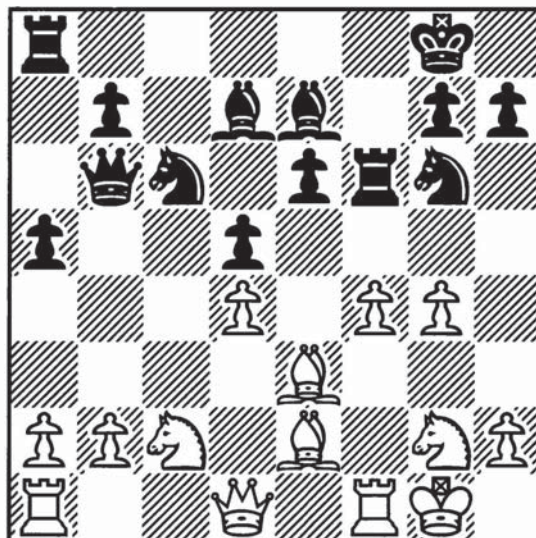
*Joel:* So your knight ends up on g6 after all. Why not play it there immediately?

*Boris:* The knight on g6 is not well placed if it goes there immediately, because White has the plan of harassing it with g2-g3 and h2-h4-h5. Here, White has already played g2-g4 and is therefore deprived of this plan after my next move 13...♙e7.

13 ♘g2 ♙e7 14 f4 0-0 15 ♙e3

The sharp 15 f5 ♘gxe5 16 ♙e3 ♘c4 17 ♙xc4 dxc4 18 d5 ♖xb2 19 dxc6 ♙xc6 gives Black three pawns for the knight and good prospects, because of the many weaknesses in White's camp.

15...f5 16 exf6 ♗xf6?!



I analyzed this at home and decided that Black has to take with the bishop. But both



times I played this position, first in 1985 against Sveshnikov, and in this game, I took with the rook instead. It shows that we often evaluate positions differently over the board than we do at home. Now analyzing this position at home again, I think that capturing with the bishop is more precise because Black keeps control over the h4-square.

**17 ♖d3?!**

More dangerous for Black was 17 h4! ♖d6 18 h5 ♗ge7 with a murky position, E.Sveshnikov-B.Gulko, USSR Championship, Riga 1985.

**17...♖d6 18 h4 ♖af8 19 g5**

The most straightforward way. Inserting 19 ♖d2 ♖c7 doesn't promise White anything; for example, 20 g5 ♖f6 21 f5!? ♗ge7! (after 21...exf5 22 h5 ♗ge7 23 ♗f4, White would have excellent compensation for the pawn) 22 fxe6 ♖xe6 and Black's position is preferable.

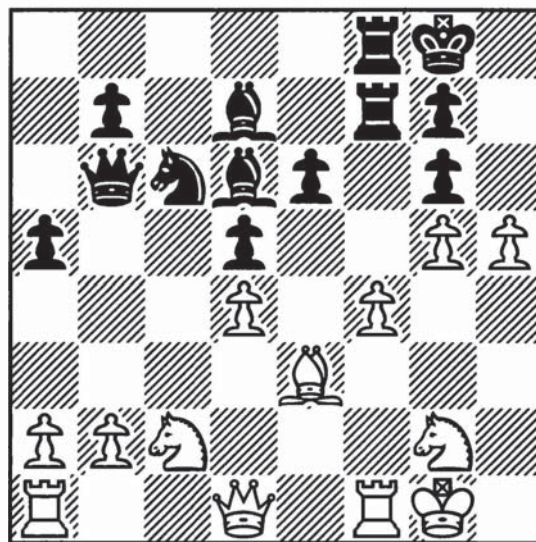
**19...♖f6 20 ♖xg6**

This is the continuation of Benjamin's plan. He will play h4-h5 next.

The pawn sacrifice 20 f5 exf5 21 h5 ♗ge7 22 ♗f4 is not so good here, because after 22...♗d8! (intending ...♗e6), Black will weaken the blockade.

The sharp 20 h5 ♗xf4 21 ♖xf4 ♖xf4 22 ♖xh7+ ♖h8 23 ♖g6 looks attractive for White, but after 23...♖h2+ 24 ♖xh2 ♖xf1 25 ♖xf1 ♖xf1 26 ♖xf1 ♖c7+! (26...♖d8 27 ♖f7 would be much worse, or if 26...♖g8 then 27 ♖f7+ ♖h7 28 ♖g6+ ♖g8 with a draw) 27 ♖h1 ♖d6, White's attack is refuted.

**20...hxg6 21 h5**



**Exercise:** What should Black play here? (difficulty level 5)

**Joel:** I like 21...♗e7, preparing to take back on g6 with the knight, and defending the light squares. If White doesn't take on g6, then Black can play 22...gxh5 23 ♖xh5 g6. Black would then be able to blockade the f-file with ...♗f5 and bring the rooks to the open h-file after ...♖g7.

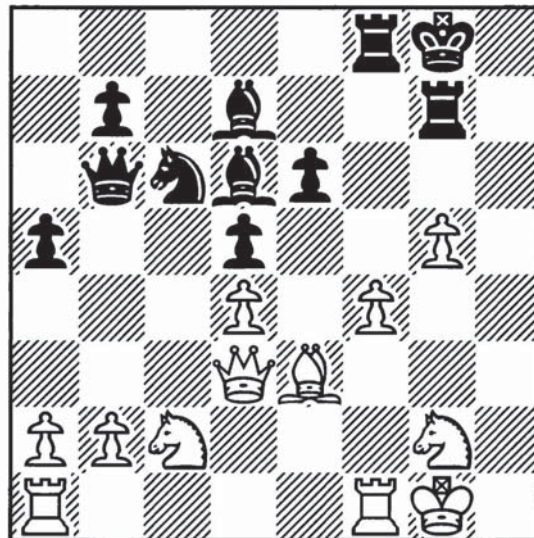


**Boris:** Your move 21...♘e7 leads to an extremely unclear position after 22 hxg6 ♜xg6 23 ♜h5 ♙e8! (the only move, because White has 24 g6 and wins if the knight moves) 24 ♜xg6 ♙xf4 25 ♜xf7+ ♜xf7 26 ♜xf4, when White has a rook and two minor pieces for the queen. Instead, Black sacrifices a pawn to gain full control over the light squares.

**21...gxf5! 22 ♜xh5 g6!**

Fulfilling my plan. 22...♜f5 23 ♘h4 ♜xb2 24 ♘xf5 ♜xf5 25 ♜ac1 was less clear, since Black's king is not safe.

**23 ♜xg6+ ♜g7 24 ♜d3**



**Exercise:** What to play now? (difficulty level 2)

**Joel:** 24...♘e7 of course. After my previous analysis it seemed like the only move.

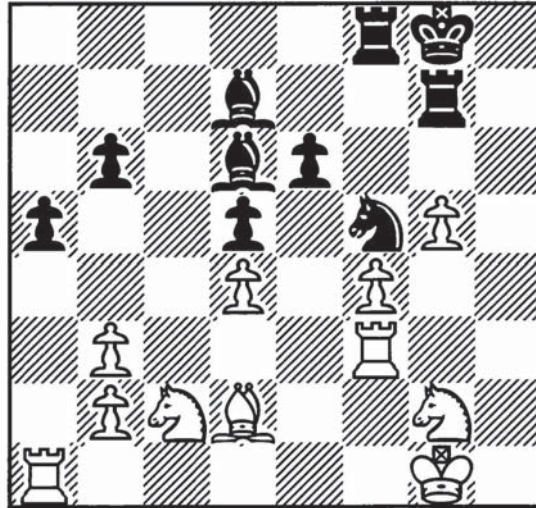
**Boris:** Yes. All Black's pieces have meaningful routes: the knight is heading to f5, the bishop to b5, and the rooks to the h-file. Because Black has full control of the light squares, his position is excellent and more than compensates for the pawn.

**24...♘e7 25 ♜b3 ♜xb3!**

**Joel:** Why do you give this move an exclamation mark?

**Boris:** Usually, when you are down on material, you try to keep your queen on the board and win in the middlegame. Here I decided to transpose to an endgame because it is only Black who can have the advantage with his domination of the light squares.

**26 axb3 b6 27 ♙d2 ♘f5 28 ♜f3**



**Exercise:** What should Black play here? (difficulty level 1)

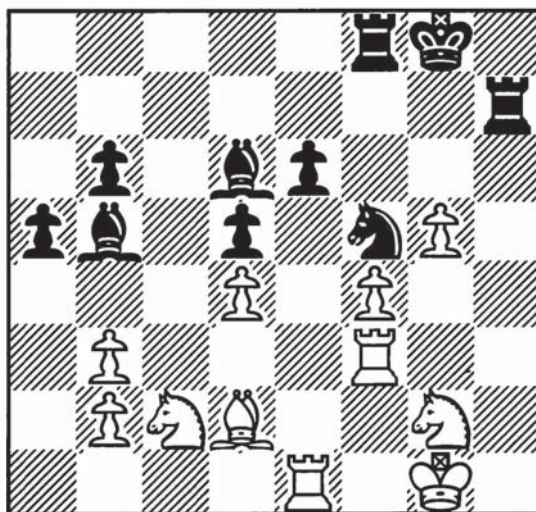
**Joel:** I thought I could play 28...♘xd4 but realized too late that, after 29 ♘xd4 ♙c5 30 ♙e3 e5, White can just take on e5 because the rook on f3 is protected by the knight on d4. My plan all along was to play 28...♖h7, but I guess I got distracted.

**Boris:** Yes, 28...♖h7 was natural and obvious.

**Joel:** Can you say something about following plans and getting distracted (or not) by moves you see on the board, as the variations you have calculated play out?

**Boris:** You know, in chess, very often we have sudden tactical opportunities that we have to check carefully. We have to be flexible because, very often, interesting opportunities will appear. *What is critically important (and not easy to do) is to keep a balance between following your plan and spotting your opportunities.*

**28...♖h7 29 ♖af1?! ♙b5 30 ♖e1**



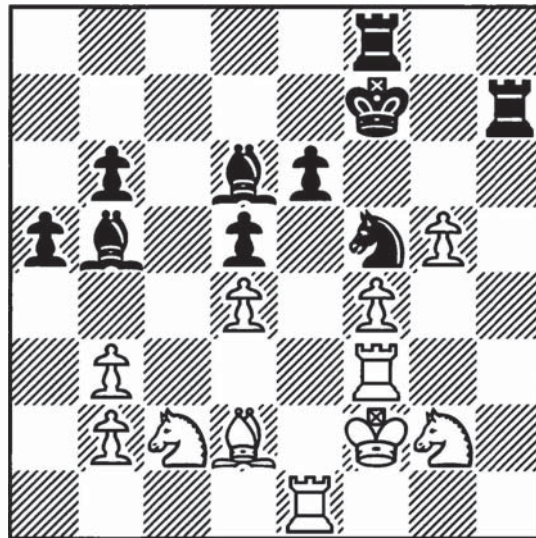
**Exercise:** Offer a move and find a plan. (difficulty level 2)

*Joel:* My plan all along was to play ...♔g7, but I realized (too late again) that the e6-pawn is hanging.

*Boris:* Yes, Black has to fulfill the goal of doubling rooks on the h-file and the need to protect the e6-pawn simultaneously, which he can do with 30...♔f7.

**30...♔f7 31 ♔f2?!**

After this White cannot extinguish his opponent's initiative. He had to play 31 ♔c3! with good changes to survive; for example, 31...♖fh8 32 ♖ce3 ♗h1+ 33 ♔f2 ♖xe1 34 ♖xe1 ♗h2+ 35 ♔g1 ♖h4 36 ♔xh2 ♖xf3+ 37 ♖xf3 ♗xf4+ 38 ♔h3 ♗xe3 39 ♗d2 with a drawish position.



**Exercise:** What should Black play now? (difficulty level 2)

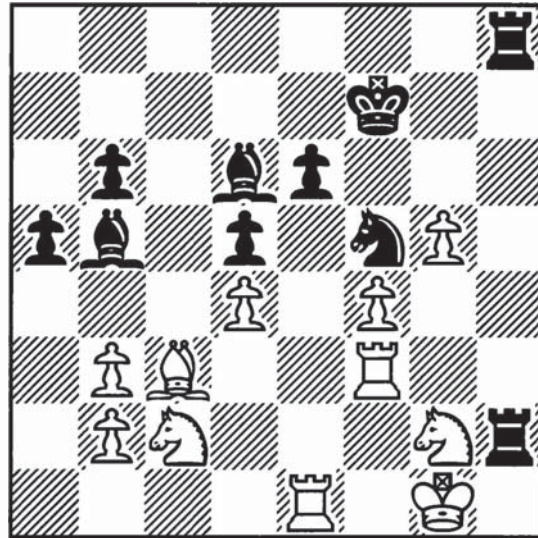
*Joel:* I would play 31...♖h2. How could you not?

*Boris:* Very good. After obtaining open files and controlling weak squares, the next stage has to be penetration into the enemy camp.

**31...♖h2 32 ♔c3?**

Now White loses his f-pawn and his position collapses. He could prolong his resistance with 32 ♔g1 ♖fh8 33 ♔c3.



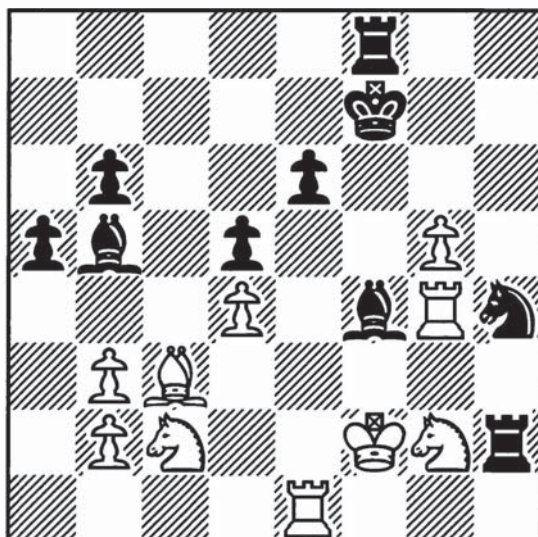


**Exercise:** How should Black respond? (difficulty level 3)

*Joel:* I would play 33...Nf4, when 34 Nxf4 B8xh4 looks good for Black.

*Boris:* You're right that Black has to exchange knights because White's counterpart on g2 was the main defender of his king. Your next move, however, is inaccurate because after 34...B8xh4 35 Nf3, the rook on h2 is awkwardly placed. Black's rooks have more freedom of movement if you play 34...B2xh4! instead, when White's position is desperate.

32...Nf4 33 Bg3 Bxf4 34 Bg4



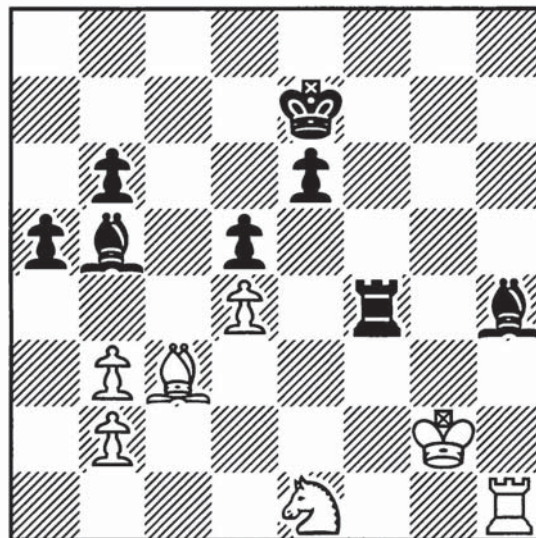
**Exercise:** What to play? (difficulty level 2)

*Joel:* I made a horrible blunder in this position. I played 34...Bg6? thinking I came up

with a brilliancy and was sure to get the question right. I calculated that White couldn't play 35 ♖xh4 because after 35...♗xg5+ Black wins. To my chagrin, I didn't see that 34...♔g6? loses to the obvious 35 ♖xe6+.

**Boris:** 34...♔g6 doesn't lose to 35 ♖xe6+ because Black has 35...♔f5, forking the two rooks. However, White can play 35 ♖xh4, as after 35...♗xg5+ 36 ♔g3 ♖xg2+ 37 ♔xg2 ♗xh4, he can escape with 38 ♖xe6+. From this continuation it is clear that the e6-pawn needs to be protected. You had the right idea but the wrong execution. Black can both attack and defend with the move 34...♔e7.

**34...♔e7! 35 ♖xh4 ♗xg5+ 36 ♔g3 ♖xg2+ 37 ♔xg2 ♗xh4 38 ♖h1 ♖f4 39 ♖e1**



**Exercise:** What should Black play here? (difficulty level 2)

**Joel:** I would play 39...♗e2, restricting White's pieces.

**Boris:** Correct! *In a winning position it is important to prevent your opponent from obtaining counterplay.* Now the game is over.

**39...♗e2! 40 ♗d2 ♖g4+**

**Boris:** Killing White's last dream of taking on h4 with his rook and following with ♗g5+. **41 ♔h3 ♖xd4 42 ♗e3 ♖e4 43 ♖g2 ♗f6 44 ♗xb6 ♗g4+ 45 ♔h2 ♖e2 46 ♔g3 ♗f5 0-1**

**Boris:** In this game, White won a pawn at the cost of ceding control over the light squares. Further play showed that Black's light square dominance was worth more than the price I had to pay for it.

Game 5  
**B.Gulko-V.Tseshkovsky**  
 Vilnius Zonal playoff, Sochi 1975  
 Grünfeld Defense

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 d5 4 ♙f4 ♙g7 5 e3 c5 6 dxc5 ♚a5 7 ♖c1 dxc4 8 ♙xc4 ♘c6 9 ♘f3 ♚xc5 10 ♙b3 0-0 11 0-0 ♚a5 12 h3 ♙f5 13 ♘d4!?

This variation has a reputation of being reliable for Black in the 4 ♙f4 system. The idea of White's 13th move was born over the board. These were sweet times when grandmasters didn't analyze openings until the late-middlegame with computers. We were able to improvise in the opening much earlier.

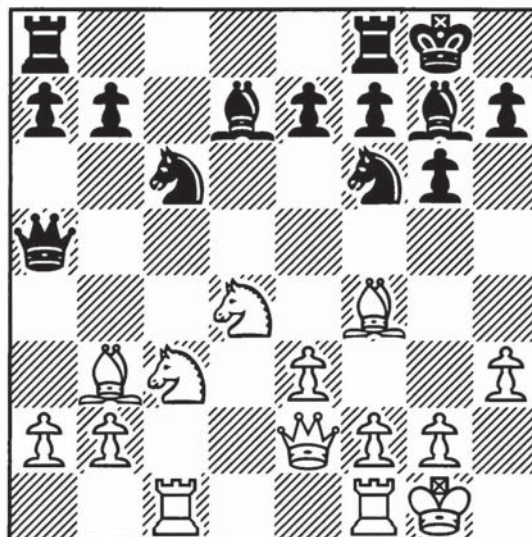
In the 11th game of the 1986 match with Kasparov, Karpov introduced a sharp exchange sacrifice in this position, but it is not dangerous for Black: 13 ♚e2 ♘e4 14 ♘d5 e5 15 ♚xc6!?. Here Kasparov played 15...exf4 and, after a sharp struggle, the game finished in a draw. Practice and analysis of later games has shown that Black is completely okay after the safer 15...bxc6.

13...♙d7

*Joel:* Why not just take on d4?

*Boris:* In the case of 13...♘xd4, White will play 14 exd4 followed by d4-d5, when Black's e7-pawn will be weaker than the pawn on d5. White's rooks will have excellent files and his position will be more active.

14 ♚e2



**Exercise:** What should Black play? Evaluate 14...e5. (difficulty level 5)

*Joel:* After 14...e5 15 ♘xc6 ♙xc6 16 ♙g5, Black's light-squared bishop has been signifi-



cantly improved and White's centrally posted knight exchanged, which seems to favor Black. On the other hand, the move 14...e5 weakens control over d5, which White can try to exploit. These seem like reasonable trade-offs, so I would go ahead with 14...e5.

**Boris:** The move 14...e5 is a significant positional mistake. It is not easy to realize because the advantages of 14...e5 you mentioned are real, but the disadvantages of the weakness along the a2-g8 diagonal and especially the d5- and f7-squares are more significant. Nevertheless, it is very difficult for Black to avoid the temptation to play 14...e5, which strong grandmasters Uhlmann and Tseshkovsky both chose. Only Kasparov in this position found a safe way forward for Black.

### 14...e5?!

In the ninth game of the 1986 match with Karpov, Kasparov demonstrated the route to equality: 14...♖xd4! 15 exd4 e6!. Karpov decided to force an early draw and continued 16 ♙d2 ♜b6 17 ♜fd1 ♙c6 18 ♙e3 ♜a5 19 ♙d2. Instead of 16 ♙d2, I planned 16 ♙e5, which wouldn't have promised much either after 16...♙c6.

The difference between taking the knight on d4 here and a move earlier is that Black has time for 15...e6, so there won't be a weak pawn on e7 to attack. In the previous note (13...♖xd4 14 exd4), if Black played 14...e6, his light-squared bishop would be extremely awkwardly placed on f5, and 15 ♜f3 would give White a big advantage.

### 15 ♖xc6 ♙xc6 16 ♙g5 h6

In the 1977 Keres Memorial, Uhlmann played 16...e4 against me, but after 17 ♙h4 ♜ad8 18 ♜c4! White created unpleasant pressure on the weak f7-square.

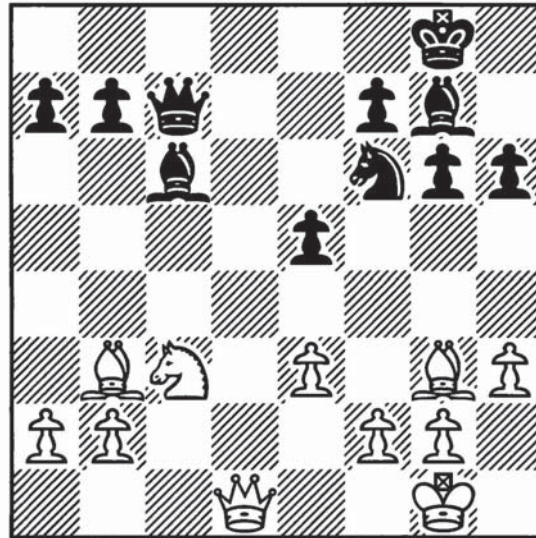
### 17 ♙h4 ♜ad8 18 ♜fd1 ♖xd1+ 19 ♖xd1 ♜d8 20 ♙g3!?

The straightforward attempt to fix a stable advantage by occupying the light squares with 20 ♖xd8+!? ♜xd8 21 ♜c4 ♜e8! (covering b5; 21...♜d7 22 ♜c5 and 21...♜e7 22 ♖b5 a6 23 ♙xf6 ♙xf6 24 ♖d6 are bad for Black) 22 ♜c5 a6 23 ♙xf6 ♙xf6 24 ♙d5 didn't promise much because of 24...e4! Then 25 ♖xe4 isn't good for White because of 25...♙xb2 26 ♖d6 ♜e5.

**Joel:** What's wrong with 27 ♙xf7+ - ?

**Boris:** In that case we will reach an endgame in which Black has the two bishops and a queenside pawn majority, which he can convert into a passed pawn. For example: 27...♙g7 28 ♜xe5+ ♙xe5 29 ♖c4 ♙c7 30 ♙e6 ♙f6 and, despite being down a pawn, it is Black who is looking for the advantage.

### 20...♖xd1+ 21 ♜xd1 ♜c7



**Exercise:** How to exploit the hidden weaknesses in Black's camp? (difficulty level 4)

*Joel:* I looked at 22 ♔d3, threatening ♔xg6, but then 22...e4 23 ♙xc7 exd3 gives Black a passed pawn. I'm not sure whether it will be strong or weak, but that doesn't seem like a good way to continue. As a result, I decided on 22 ♔c2 with the same threat without the risk.

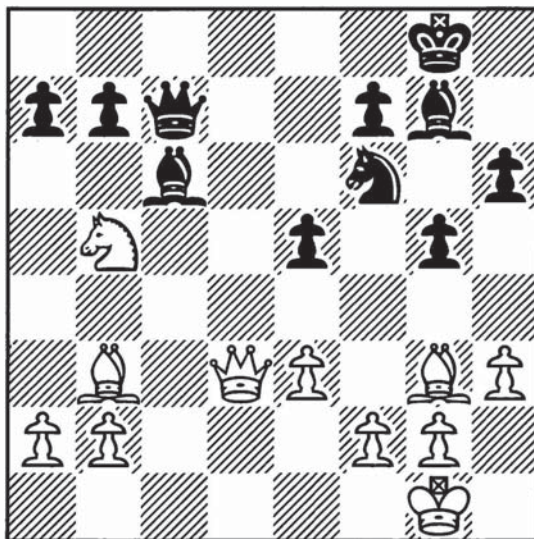
*Boris:* 22 ♔c2 has the disadvantage that the c4-square is not available to the queen. The response 22...e4 that you considered after 22 ♔d3 is actually a big achievement for White because, after 23 ♔d4, new squares become weak in Black's camp (the h2-b8 diagonal and a7) and White's advantage would become overwhelming.

**22 ♔d3! g5**

Strangely, Black could not protect the g6-pawn without serious positional concessions. For example, after 22...♙h7 23 ♔c4 ♙g8 24 ♔c5, Black would lose a pawn. In this variation you can see the benefits of the move 22 ♔d3 as opposed to 22 ♔c2. On d3, the queen has more prospects.

**23 ♔f5!?**

A reflexive move that occupies the weak f5-square. Probably 23 ♙b5!? was better.

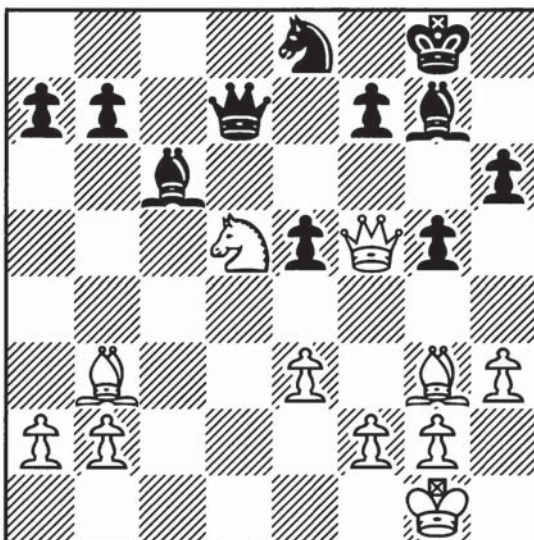


For example:

a) 23...Qa5 24 Qd6 Qd5 25 Qxd5 Qxd5 26 Qxd5 Qxd5 27 e4! (stronger than 27 Qxb7? f5!) 27...Qb4 28 a3 Qd3 29 b4 b6 30 Qc8 a5 31 b5 and the endgame is winning for White.

b) 23...Qxb5! 24 Qxb5 Qc1+! 25 Qh2 Qc7! is the only defense. The pawn on e5 is protected because of the check on g4. Nevertheless, after 26 Qd1! (if 26 e4 Qxe4 27 Qe8+ Qf8 28 Qxe5 then 28...Qxe5+! 29 Qxe5 Qd6 and Black escapes) 26...Qe4 27 Qe8+ Qh7 28 Qh5 Qd6 29 Qa4, Black is still worse.

**23...Qe8 24 Qd5 Qd7**



**Exercise:** How can White keep the initiative? (difficulty level 4)

*Joel:* I tried to make use of the fork on e7 but couldn't see how, so I would probably exchange queens and play e3-e4.



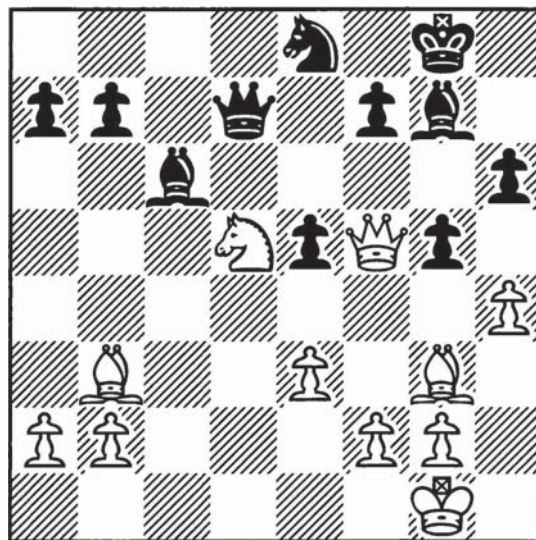
## The Theory of Weak Squares

**Boris:** You're right to try and make use of the fork on e7. Because of this fork the white queen is protected, so I had to find a way to increase the pressure on Black's position, which I did with 25 h4. This is a very good practical decision because it creates the optical illusion that the g5-pawn is under threat.

**Joel:** Why is it an optical illusion?

**Boris:** Because if I take on g5 Black can exchange queens and take back with his h-pawn. I wanted to provoke Black into exchanging queens because I want my knight on f5 where it is a very strong piece. If I had taken on d7 as you suggested, I would not have been able to bring my knight to f5 because his bishop (now on d7) would control that square.

**25 h4!**



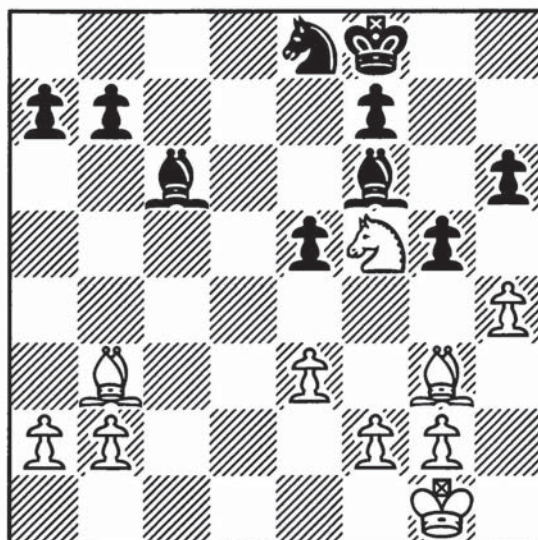
**Exercise:** What is the best way for Black? (difficulty level 6)

**25... ♖xf5?!**

Black cracks under the pressure. He had to try the paradoxical move 25... ♖h8!!, when 26 ♖xd7 ♜xd7 27 e4 would leave White with only a small edge in the endgame. With 25... ♖h8, Black would neutralize White's pressure on the a2-g8 diagonal. 25... ♖f8 would have been worse because of 26 ♜c2!, planning to check on c5.

**26 ♜e7+ ♜f8 27 ♜xf5 ♜f6?!**

The ugly-looking 27...f6 was preferable.



**Exercise:** What should White play now? (difficulty level 3)

**Joel:** I would play 28 ♖xh6, when 28...gxf4 29 ♗h2 leaves the f7-pawn under attack. White also has the threat of ♖g4, when both e5 and f6 are hanging.

**Boris:** Your suggestion has two drawbacks: 1) Pawns are exchanged, which we should avoid because it is always in the favor of the defending side; and 2) At the end of your variation, Black has 29...e4, winning the b2-pawn. After 30 ♖xf7 ♗xb2, too many pawns leave the board, increasing Black's chances for a draw. *When you have the advantage, don't exchange pawns.*

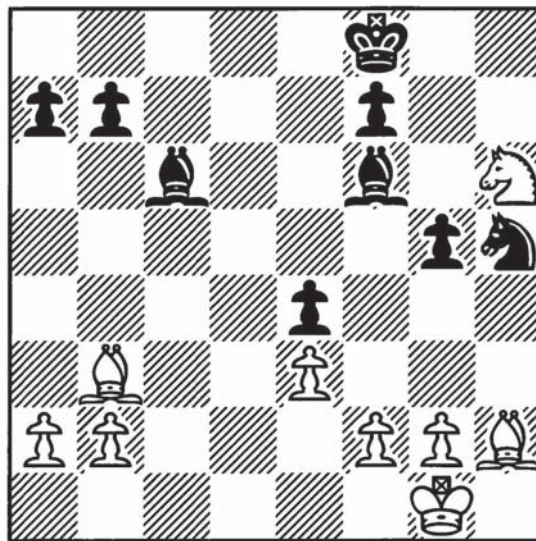
**28 h5! ♖g7?!**

Another error. After 28...♗g7 29 ♖xg7 ♖xg7 30 ♗xe5 ♖xh5 31 f3, Black would have a difficult endgame, but not as difficult as in the game.

**29 ♖xh6 ♖xh5 30 ♗h2 e4**

Here Black should played 30...♗e8 31 ♗d1 ♖g7 32 ♖g4, when White still has to demonstrate technique. After the game continuation, it is all over.

## The Theory of Weak Squares



**Exercise:** How should White continue? (difficulty level 2)

**Joel:** I would play 31 g4.

**Boris:** Very good! Black's knight is forced to a bad square where it will be restricted.

**31 g4! ♖g7 32 ♗xf7 ♕xb2 33 ♗xg5**

Here you can see the difference between 28 h5! (keeping pawns on the board) and your suggestion 28 ♗xh6 (getting rid of them). Instead of just winning the f7-pawn, White wins the g5-pawn as well. This is why *it is important not to help your opponent get rid of his weaknesses*.

**33...b5 34 ♕d6+ ♖e8 35 ♕c2 ♖d7 36 ♕c5 a5 37 ♗xe4 b4 38 f4 ♗e6 39 ♕b6 ♗xe4 40 ♕xe4 a4 41 ♕d5 1-0**

**Boris:** The permanent weaknesses created by the move 14...e5 – along the a2-g8 diagonal, especially the squares d5 and f7 – proved too difficult for Black to recover from. Black had good development, his pieces were reasonably placed, but he could not fix the weaknesses on the light squares.

This game contrasts two different types of advantage: those of development and those due to weak squares. The first type of advantage is temporary and can be remedied under certain conditions. The second type is long lasting and difficult to eliminate because, as Tarrasch formulated, pawns don't move backwards.



## Chapter Three

# The Struggle for the Initiative

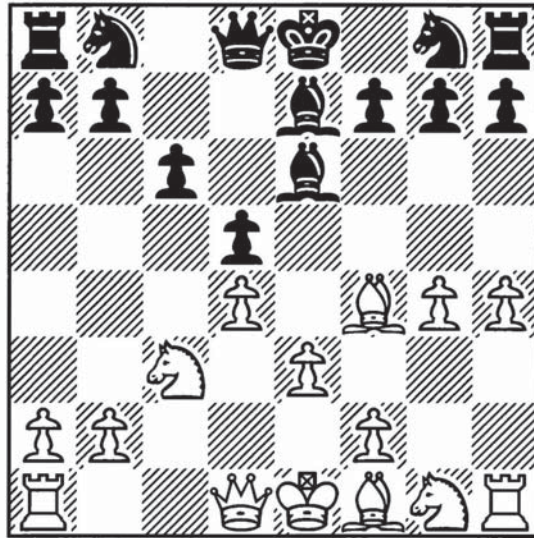
**Boris:** Now we begin a chapter on the initiative. This is a very difficult chapter because it is hard to define what the initiative is. Our first topic of the two bishops was easy to define. For example, *the advantage of the bishop pair grows as fewer pieces are left on the board.* The same goes with weak squares, which are *squares that cannot be protected by pawns, especially when there is no bishop to defend the square.* The initiative, on the other hand, is a very nebulous topic and yet, at the same time, perhaps the most important. It is regarded as one of the most significant chess advantages, and the main advantage that chess players fight for during the game.

**Joel:** I read somewhere that one way to define the initiative is *when your threats take priority over the threats of your opponent.*

**Boris:** I would say about the definition of the initiative that it is *when your will dominates the will of your opponent. The struggle for the initiative then can be defined as the struggle to impose your will on that of your opponent.*

Game 6  
**B.Gulko-S.Lputian**  
USA-Armenia match, Los Angeles 1994  
*Queen's Gambit Declined*

1 c4 e6 2 ♘c3 d5 3 d4 ♙e7 4 cxd5 exd5 5 ♙f4 c6 6 e3 ♙f5 7 g4 ♙e6 8 h4!



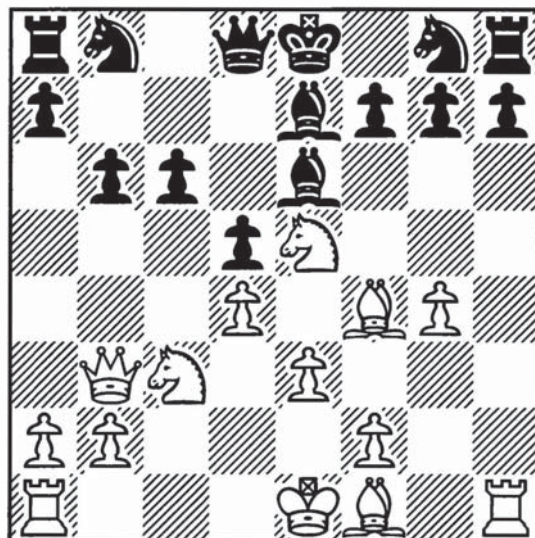
**8...g4**

White's eighth move was the final novelty introduced by Botvinnik in his final tournament. His opponent, then world champion Boris Spassky, rejected the pawn sacrifice, playing instead 8...d7!, and achieved a draw after careful defense, despite the fact that White has a space advantage on the kingside, M.Botvinnik-B.Spassky, Leiden 1970. Strong players tend to avoid what would be considered the most principled way when faced with a novelty over the board, in order to avoid their opponent's home preparation. Of course, when I played 8 h4, it was no longer a novelty and my opponent was prepared to accept the sacrifice and determine its relative merits.

**9 ♖b3 b6**

Other possibilities are 9...c8!?, avoiding queenside weaknesses, and the sharp 9...g5!?, introduced in A.Vaisser-E.Geller, Sochi 1982. Geller's idea was later found to be dubious.

**10 ♘f3 ♙e7 11 ♘e5!**



In the annotations to the Botvinnik-Spassky game, it was mentioned that White can regain the pawn by playing 11 ♖xb8 ♜xb8 12 ♘e5, but I don't see any advantage for White after 12...♝c8 13 ♜a4 b5 14 ♜xa7 ♘f6. In the game, I preferred to play without the pawn, hoping for the initiative. Exchanging the bishop for the undeveloped knight on b8 would be a moral surrender in the fight for the initiative.

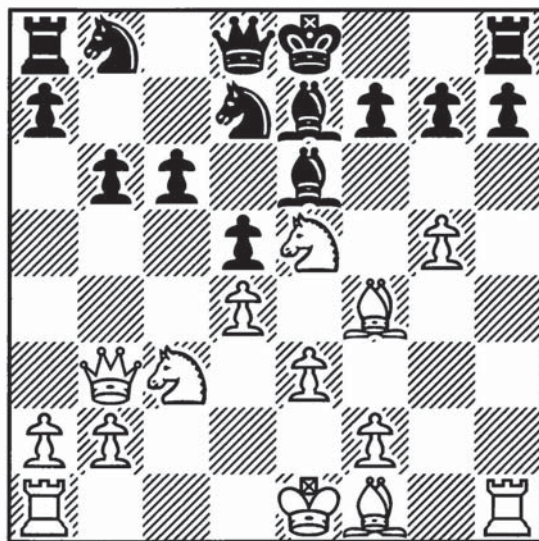
**11...♘f6**

Black could try to finish his development with 11...♙d6!?, planning ...♘e7, after which White could play 12 ♜c2 with an active position. Lputian later tried 11...g5!?, but after 12 ♙g3 ♘f6 13 ♙e2 ♜c8 14 ♝c1 ♘bd7 15 ♘b5! ♘c5! 16 dxc5 cxb5 17 ♜xb5+ ♙f8 18 ♘c6, Black obtained a bad position in A.Yusupov-S.Lputian, Germany-Armenia match, Baden Baden 1996.

**12 g5**

More aggressive than 12 ♙e2, which was played in E.Vladimirov-O.Kaminsky, Leningrad 1974, when 12...♘fd7 gave Black a good game. It was because of Black's success in Vladimirov-Kaminsky that Lputian decided to try this variation with 8...♙xh4.

**12...♘fd7**



**Exercise:** What would you play here? (difficulty level 2)

*Joel:* I would play 13 g6.

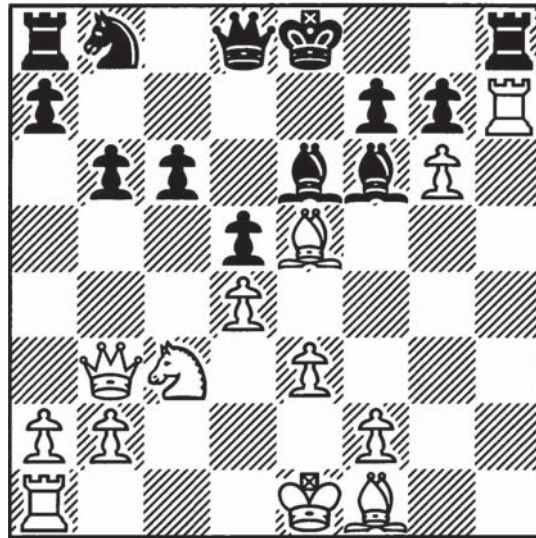
*Boris:* Correct! That is the right way to develop the initiative. *When fighting for the initiative it is important try and play the most aggressive move.*

**13 g6 ♘xe5 14 ♙xe5 ♙f6!**

After the inferior 14...fxg6 15 ♙xg7 ♝g8 16 ♝xh7, White is much better.

**15 ♝xh7**





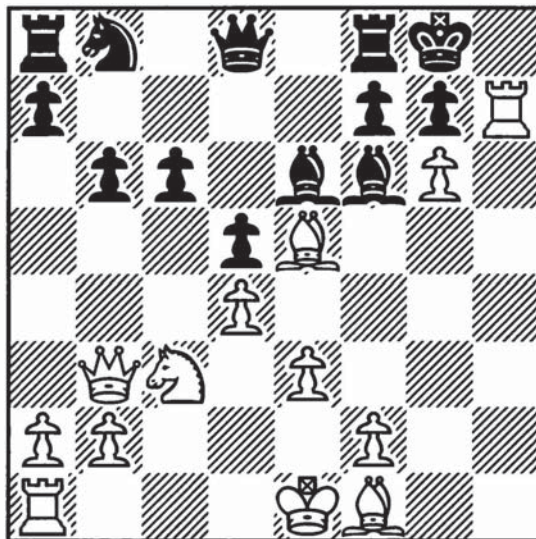
**Exercise:** Find a defense for Black. (difficulty level 1)

*Joel:* I thought 15...Rxh7 16 gxh7 g6 looked interesting.

*Boris:* In that case White can promote the pawn immediately: 17 h8♚+ ♟xh8 18 ♟xh8 and although Black can trap the bishop with 18...f6 19 ♟g7 ♞f7 20 ♟h6 g5, after 21 ♚d1 (gazing at h5) 21...♞g6 22 ♟xg5 fxg5 23 ♟d3+, White has a dangerous attack. And 17 e4! looks even stronger.

Black has a much better defense in 15...0-0!

**15...0-0!**



**Exercise:** What should White play now? (difficulty level 3)

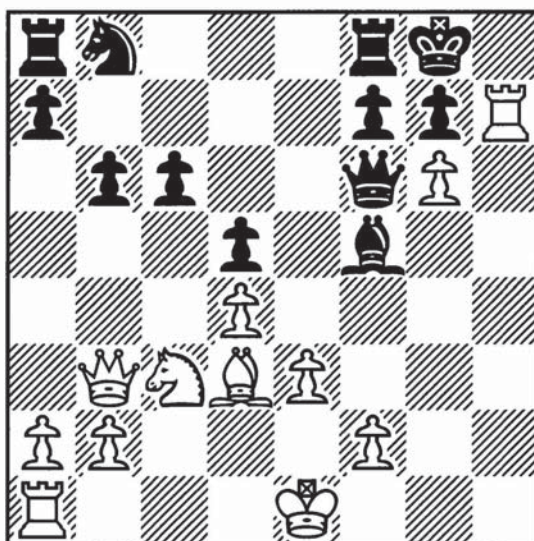
Joel: I liked 16 ♖c2.

Boris: I didn't consider that move. *When we have the initiative we try to avoid simplification and prevent the opponent from activating his pieces.* After the move you suggested, Black can exchange on e5 and bring his queen to g5, when it is unclear whether White has the initiative at all. It is important to keep Black's f6-bishop on the board, which is not active itself and prevents his knight from reaching f6, defending the kingside.

### 16 ♙g3!

The importance of not taking on f6 is illustrated by 16 ♙xf6?! ♜xf6 17 ♙d3 fxg6!. After 18 ♜h2 c5, Black has reasonable counterplay. Note that it would be bad for White to continue with 19 ♜xd5? due to 19...♜g5.

On the other hand, if Black plays 17...♙f5?



**Exercise:** Find the combination. (difficulty level 3)

Joel: I would play 18 ♜xd5 cxd5 19 ♜xd5, when a8 and f5 are hanging, or if 19...♙xd3 then 20 ♜h8+ wins due to 20...♙xh8 21 ♜h1+, followed by mate.

Boris: Correct. There is also the important variation that follows 19...♙xg6.

Joel: I didn't consider 19...♙xg6 at all.

Boris: It's beautiful. After 19...♙xg6, White has 20 ♜h1!.

Joel: I don't understand.

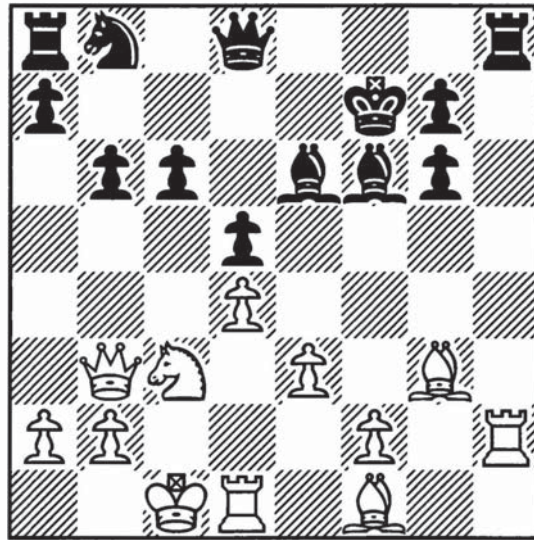
Boris: The bishop on d3 protects the rook on h7 through Black's bishop on g6.

### 16...fxg6!

Black has to give air to his king. 16...♙f5 was worse because, after 17 0-0-0 ♙xg6 18 ♜h2, the h-file is still significant in White's kingside attack. Whereas after the game continuation, this factor loses its importance.

17 ♜h2 ♙f7! 18 0-0-0 ♜h8?!

## The Struggle for the Initiative



**Exercise:** How can White seize the initiative? (difficulty level 3)

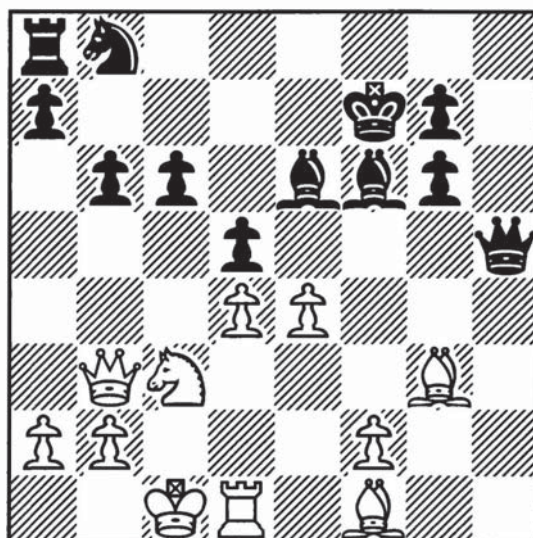
*Joel:* 19 e4 is what I thought about playing.

*Boris:* Your idea to play in the center is correct, but it is much more promising after decoying the queen to the corner. Black overestimated the importance of the h-file which is now not significant.

Instead of 18...♖h8, Black should have played 18...♔d7!, when 19 e4 does not promise much because of 19...♕g5+ 20 f4 ♕h6, planning to bring the knight on h5 via f6 with counterplay against the f4- and g3-squares.

**19 ♖xh8 ♜xh8 20 e4! ♜h5**

Obviously 20...dxe4 21 ♕c4 was bad for Black.





**Exercise:** Find the weak square in Black's camp and then the strongest move. (difficulty level 4)

*Joel:* It looks to me like d6 is the weak square, so I would play 21 ♖d6.

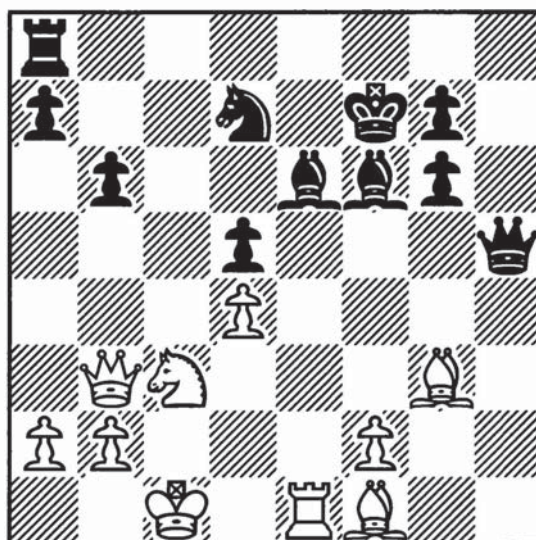
*Boris:* I don't see the purpose in that move. You simply waste time. It is the e6-square that is weak. White's queen stares menacingly at the black king and Black's light-squared bishop is the only piece holding his position together. Therefore White targets the e6-square with 21 ♜e1 and threatens to sacrifice the exchange on e6, tearing Black's position open.

**21 ♜e1!**

21 exd5 didn't promise anything after 21...cxd5 22 ♗g2 ♘c6!.

**21...♘d7 22 exd5 ♗xd5**

If Black plays 22...cxd5 this time:



**Exercise:** Find a combination. (difficulty level 4)

*Joel:* I liked 23 ♜xe6 ♙xe6 24 ♘xd5, and if 24...♞xd5 then 25 ♗c4 wins.

*Boris:* Right idea, but your last move is wrong. After 24...♞xd5?, White wins with 25 ♗h3+!, but not 25 ♗c4 because of 25...♞c8.

There are other variations to consider after 23 ♜xe6! ♙xe6 24 ♘xd5 too:

a) 24...♞g5+ 25 ♘f4+! (not 25 f4? due to 25...♞xd5, since 26 ♗h3+ can be met by 26...♙d6) 25...♙d6 (25...♙e7 loses to 26 ♞e3+) 26 ♞e6+ ♙c7 27 ♙d1! and White wins.

b) 24...♞h1 25 ♘f4+! ♙d6 26 ♞e6+ ♙c7 27 ♘d5+ etc.

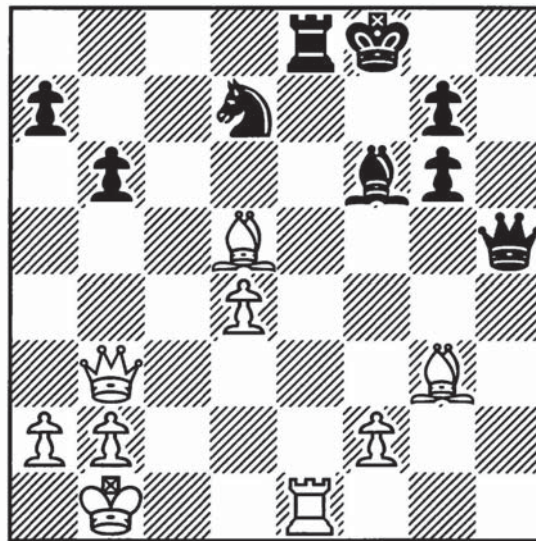
**23 ♘xd5 cxd5 24 ♗g2**

Without his light-squared bishop, Black's position collapses.

**24...♞c8+ 25 ♙b1 ♞e8**

Neither 25...♖f5+ 26 ♔e4, nor 25...♜c4 26 ♜b5 ♜f5+ 27 ♔e4! dxe4 28 ♜xc4+ ♜e6 29 d5 would have helped. White wins in both cases.

**26 ♔xd5+ ♚f8**



**Exercise:** How should White proceed? (difficulty level 1)

*Joel:* I liked 27 ♔d6+, since if 27...♔e7, White has 28 ♜xe7 ♜xe7 29 ♔g8.

*Boris:* The problem with your variation is that Black has 29...♜h1+! 30 ♚c2 ♜c6+, winning the bishop on d6.

Probably White has several ways to win, but as I've said: *If you have the initiative, don't simplify; try and increase your attack.* In this position the h-file becomes important again, and after the game continuation, White's attack is decisive.

**27 ♜h1 ♜f5+ 28 ♚a1 ♚e7 29 ♜a3+ ♚d8 30 ♜d6 ♜c2**

Black loses after 30...♔xd4 31 ♜c7+ ♚e7 32 ♜e1+ as well.

**31 ♔c6 ♜f5 32 ♜c7+ ♚e7 33 ♔d6+ 1-0**

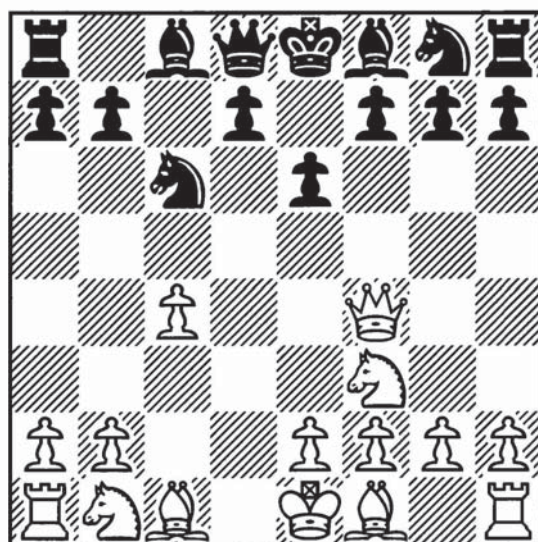
The next game was played in the first round of the Capablanca Memorial. As preparation for this tournament, I read Emanuel Lasker's book about his match with Capablanca, which was also in Cuba in the summer without air conditioning. I learned that in such climates it is better not to think too deeply, because you can get tired quickly and lose your ability to concentrate. So I decided to play quickly and easily. The simplest heuristic for a chess player is to aim for the initiative, which I did in this game.

Game 7  
P.C.Peev-B.Gulko  
Cienfuegos 1976  
Queen's Pawn Opening

**1 d4 e6 2 ♘f3 c5 3 c4 cxd4 4 ♙xd4**

My opponent was in those years one of the best Bulgarian players. He knew that the theoretical continuation was 4 ♘xd4, but Peev wanted to deviate from theory and use the power of the queen to create complications in the early stages of the game. The disadvantage of this move is obvious: White will lose time when the queen is attacked, but he hopes to use his queen actively.

**4... ♞c6 5 ♙f4**



**Exercise:** What should Black play? (difficulty level 3)

*Joel:* 5...g6 with the idea of ...♗h6 looks interesting.

*Boris:* But after 6 ♘c3 ♗h6 7 ♙d6, White is better.

*Joel:* Right.

*Boris:* For Black, it is simplest to attack the white queen from d6, when the h4-square is covered by the black queen.

*Joel:* Why is that?

*Boris:* After 5... ♘f6, White's queen has the h4-square; therefore it is important to play 5...d5, followed by ...♗d6, while the black knight is still on g8.

**5...d5! 6 cxd5 exd5 7 e3 ♗d6 8 ♙a4**

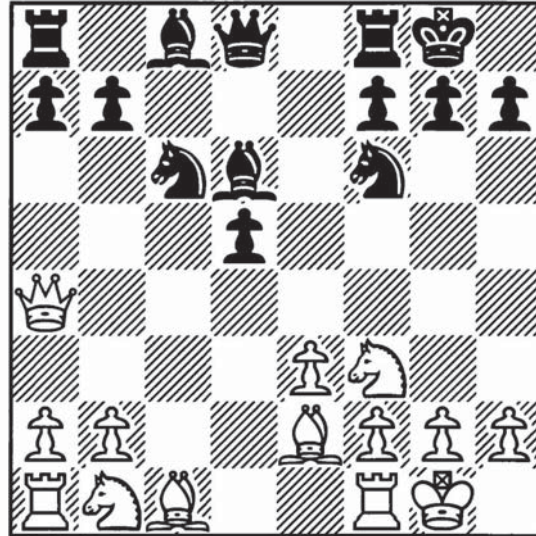
Of course 8 ♙h4 was not attractive for White because it simply transposes to an inferior endgame.



Joel: How is it inferior? Black has an IQP.

Boris: But he has a lead in development and the knight on h4 is placed terribly. After 8...♖xh4 9 ♜xh4 ♜b4, Black has a strong initiative.

8...♜f6 9 ♚e2 0-0 10 0-0



**Exercise:** Find the most aggressive operation. (difficulty level 4)

Joel: I don't see anything aggressive in this position.

Boris: What are the disadvantages in White's position?

Joel: The exposed queen.

Boris: Right, how can you take advantage of it?

Joel: Not sure; 10...♜d7 and 10...♜e8 come to mind.

Boris: After 10...♜e8, 11 ♜c3 covers the e4-square, and 10...♜d7 is not much of a threat either. Black has a third way – can you see it?

Joel: 10...b5 looks ridiculous.

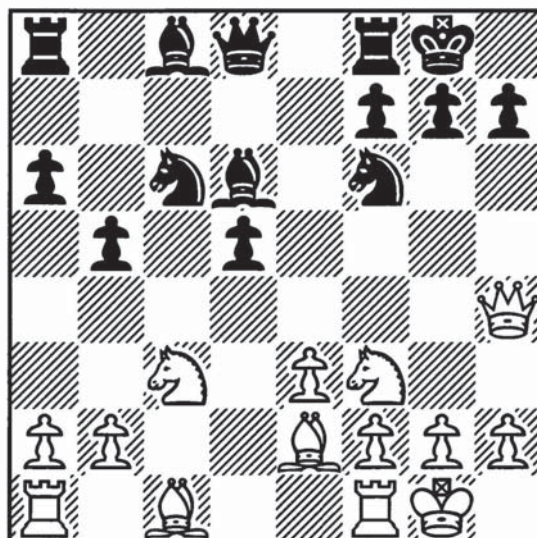
Boris: Yes, but can you prepare it?

Joel: Yes, with 10...a6.

Boris: Correct! The idea is that after 11 ♜c3 b5 12 ♜xb5 axb5! 13 ♜xa8 ♜b6, White's queen is trapped.

Joel: Wow!

10...a6! 11 ♜c3 b5! 12 ♜h4



**Exercise:** How to continue to pursue White's queen? (difficulty level 2)

Joel: Maybe with a move like 12...♘e7 - ?

Boris: *Playing actively, we have to keep in mind two ideas: 1) creating threats; and 2) improving the position of your pieces.* The knight on c6 is already placed not so badly. Which piece can you improve?

Joel: The rook on a8?

Boris: The a8-rook cannot be improved with any immediate threats to the queen, but the rook on e8 can. In order to accomplish this you need to kick the knight on c3 first.

Joel: So the idea is ...b5-b4 and ...♖e8-e4 - ?

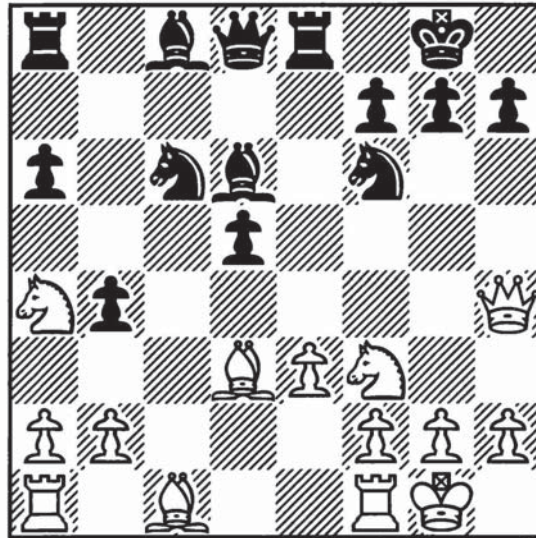
Boris: Correct!

**12...b4!**

Boris: The immediate 12...♖e8 didn't promise much because White has 13 a3, preventing ...b5-b4.

**13 ♘a4 ♖e8 14 ♙d3**

White's only reasonable defense against ...♖e4.



**Exercise:** How can Black develop his initiative? (difficulty level 3)

Joel: I don't see anything.

Boris: What is White's main problem?

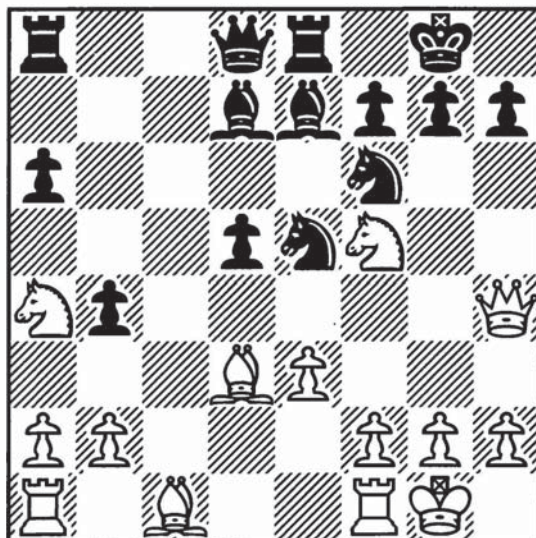
Joel: Still his queen, of course.

Boris: How can you continue to harass her?

Joel: 14...Qe7 - ?

Boris: Correct! White exposed his queen to attack early. All I'm doing is harassing her. First, I played ...a7-a6, ...b7-b5, then ...b5-b4 and ...Qe8 (with the threat of ...Qe4), and now I play ...Qe7 with the threat of ...Qe4, discovering an attack on the queen.

**14...Qe7! 15 Qd4 Qd7! 16 Qf5 Qe5**





**Joel:** Why doesn't he just take the bishop on e7?

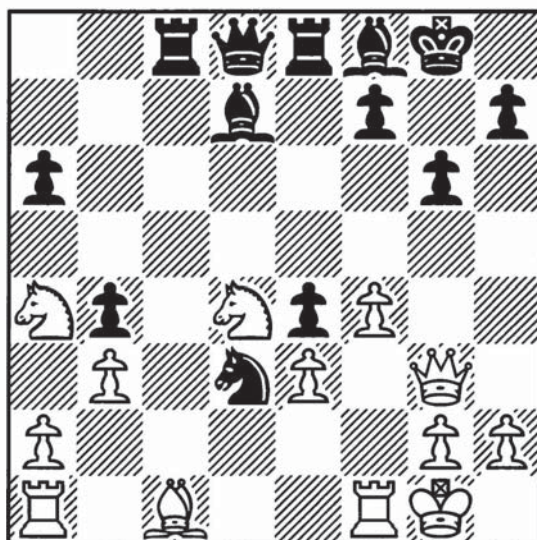
**Boris:** Because after 17 ♖xe7+ ♜xe7 18 ♙c2 ♙b5 19 ♚d1 ♜c7 20 ♙b3 ♜c6 21 ♜xb4 ♜e4, Black has decisive threats; for example, if 22 ♙xd5 then 22...♜f3+ 23 gxf3 ♜g6+ 24 ♙h1 ♜xf2 mate.

At the time of the game, I didn't analyze this but estimated that Black had to be winning because of his tremendous initiative.

**17...♙f8 18 b3**

It is important that White doesn't have the typical combination 18 ♜h6+ ♙h8 19 ♜xe5, as after 19...gxf6, he loses his unfortunate knight on a4. Nor does 19 f4 help: after 19...♜h5 20 fxe5 ♜xg3 21 ♜xf7+ ♙g8 22 ♜xd8 ♜xf1, White again loses material.

**18...g6 19 ♙b1 ♜e4 20 ♙xe4 dxe4 21 ♜d4 ♜c8 22 f4 ♜d3**

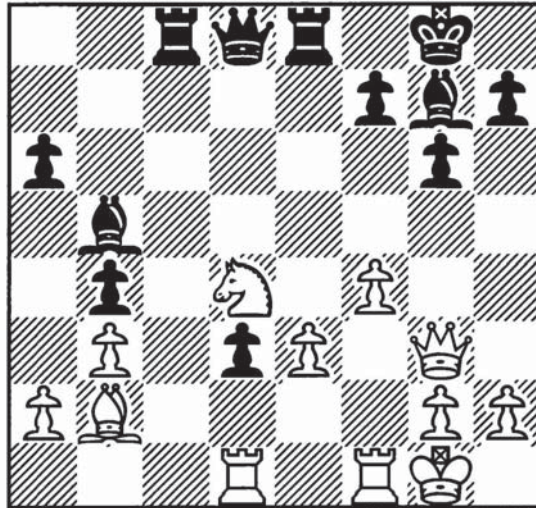


The hunting of White's queen is over. The queen is safe, but Black now has a decisive positional advantage. *This is a typical example of the transformation of a dynamic advantage to a static advantage.* White's position is collapsing because in order to save his queen he had to compromise his position fatally. As my good friend Yuri Razuvaev used to say when estimating a position: "All is bad."

**23 ♜b2 ♙g7**

Black could win two minor pieces for the rook with 23...♜xc1 24 ♜axc1 ♜xb2, but the move in the game is equally good.

**24 ♜xd3 exd3 25 ♙b2 ♙b5 26 ♜ad1**



**Exercise:** How to destroy the coordination of White's pieces? (difficulty level 3)

*Joel:* I'm not sure.

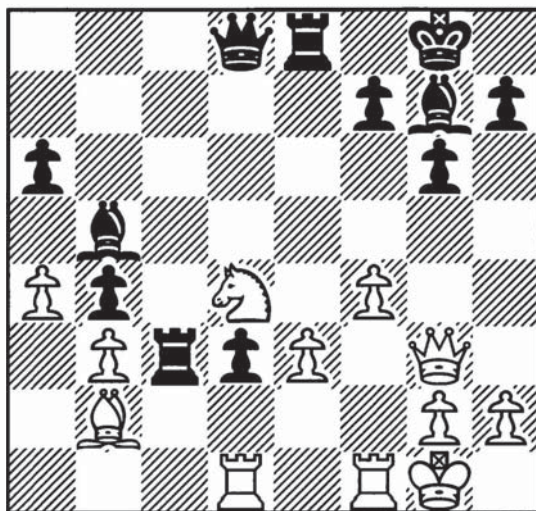
*Boris:* White's pieces defend each other. The bishop on b2 and the pawn on e3 protect the knight, which is the stronghold of White's position. How can you disrupt the cohesion of this set-up?

*Joel:* When you put it that way, it seems that 26...♖c3 provides the needed interference. If White takes on c3, Black gets two connected passers.

*Boris:* Right, and that's not an option for White.

**26...♖c3! 27 a4**

27 ♘xb5 axb5 28 ♖f3 d2 29 ♚f2 ♖c2 was hopeless for White.



**Exercise:** Find a move. (difficulty level 1)

Joel: 27...♖xe3 looks really strong.

Boris: Good.

27...♖xe3 28 ♘f3 ♙c6 29 ♗f2 ♖xf3 0-1

This strategy of playing for the initiative was very simple and good for a hot tropical climate. It is also good, however, in cooler climates when you can think more deeply.

Game 8

**R.Vera Gonzalez-B.Gulko**

World Team Championship, Lucerne 1993

*Queen's Pawn Opening*

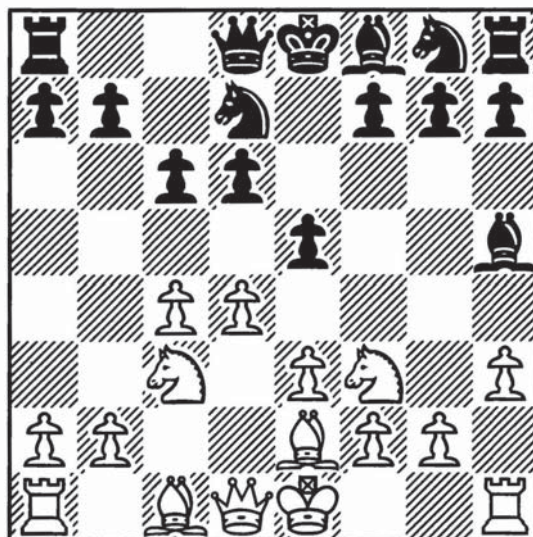
This was the first round of a very memorable tournament, in which we were able to win the gold medal – the only gold medal the United States has won in the World Team Championships in modern history. My opponent was a very solid Cuban grandmaster, so I decided to take risks in the opening with Black, trying to fight for the initiative.

1 d4 d6 2 ♘f3 ♙g4 3 c4 ♘d7 4 ♘c3 e5 5 e3

This is not the most active way for White, so I decided to play ambitiously. The strongest and most common move is 5 g3!, which gives White a pleasant edge and caused the system Black uses in this game to lose popularity.

5...c6!? 6 h3 ♙h5 7 ♙e2

White's approach to the opening was not very active, so Black has already started to think about fighting for the initiative.



**Exercise:** Can Black play actively with 7...f5 - ?  
What is White's best response? (difficulty level 3)



*Joel:* Well, the response I would be worried about is 8 ♖b3.

*Boris:* Of course it is possible to play that way, but it's not a refutation of Black's kingside ambitions. Generally, when we choose an active set-up, especially for Black, we take risk. We have to consider whether White can use it against us; and because White hasn't castled yet, he can in fact exploit this by playing actively on the kingside himself with 8 g4!. After 8...fxg4 9 ♖h2 ♗g6 10 hxg4 ♕g6 11 ♖f3!, Black cannot take on g4 because of ♖h4, when White has good prospects on the kingside.

Nevertheless, because the idea of ...f7-f5 before developing the king's knight is so attractive for Black, I played 7...♕e7, waiting for White to castle and keeping the option of ...f7-f5 open. This way White would not have the g2-g4 pawn thrust at his disposal.

**7...♕e7 8 0-0**

Now Black can fulfill his plan. 8 b4!?, postponing kingside castling and taking action on the queenside, deserved attention.

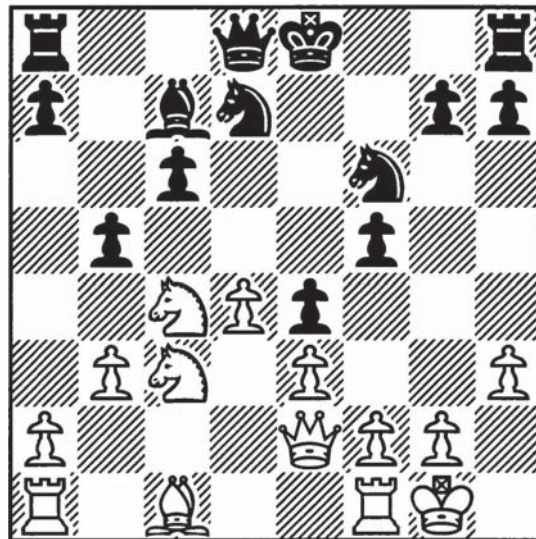
**8...f5!? 9 c5**

White tries to respond actively to his opponent's plan. It would have been better to stop Black's idea of ...e5-e4 by playing 9 e4!? f4 10 c5 ♕xf3 11 ♕xf3 dxc5 12 dxe5 ♖xe5 13 ♕xf4 ♗xd1 14 ♖fxd1 ♖xf3+ 15 gxf3 ♖f6 with a complicated endgame.

**9...e4 10 cxd6 ♕xd6 11 ♖d2 ♕xe2 12 ♗xe2 ♖gf6 13 ♖c4 ♕c7 14 b3?!**

Here 14 f4! was more prudent, taking control of the e5-square. Then after 14...0-0 15 ♖e5 ♖b6, White's position is solid.

**14...b5!**



**Exercise:** How can White fight for the initiative? (difficulty level 4)

*Joel:* Well, his knight is under attack. Since the e5-square is covered, that leaves a3, b2, and d2. I don't want to block in the dark-squared bishop from getting to a3, so I guess I

would play 15 ♖d2 with the idea of ♜fd1 and ♜f1-g3 in Ruy Lopez style. But I have to say, this doesn't seem like a way to fight for the initiative.

**Boris:** You're right. *What is more risky? To give the initiative to your opponent or to sacrifice a piece without clear compensation.*

**Joel:** To sacrifice a piece.

**Boris:** If you study the games of Fischer and Kasparov, you will see that they never choose the passive option; they would rather take the risk of sacrificing a piece for unclear compensation than go into a passive position.

**Joel:** They fight for the initiative at all cost.

**Boris:** Right. Here, Fischer or Kasparov would undoubtedly play 15 ♙a3!?. After 15...bxc4 16 ♜xc4, White only has one pawn for the knight, but Black cannot castle and the position becomes extremely messy. For example: 16...♜f8 17 f3! (much worse is 17 ♜xc6+ ♚f7 18 ♜c4+ ♚g6, since Black's king is completely safe in his unusual position) 17...♜d7 18 fxe4 fxe4 19 ♜xe4! ♜xe4 20 ♜f7! ♜d6 21 ♜xd7 ♜xc4 22 ♜e7+ ♚d8 23 bxc4 and despite the exchange of queens, White has excellent compensation for the piece.

My opponent played the move you suggested and received a passive game, after giving me the initiative.

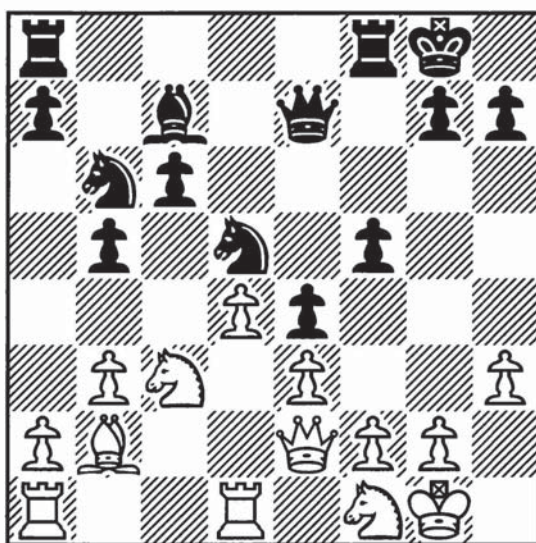
**15 ♜d2?! ♜e7 16 ♜d1**

The attempt to build a barrier against the black pieces with 16 f4 would leave White in an inferior position after 16...exf3 17 ♜xf3 0-0.

**16...0-0 17 ♜f1 ♜b6!**

Black could cement his positional advantage by playing against White's bad bishop with 17...♙a5!?. 18 ♙d2 ♙xc3 19 ♙xc3 ♜d5. Instead, I chose to play against White's king, which promised more.

**18 ♙b2 ♜fd5!?**

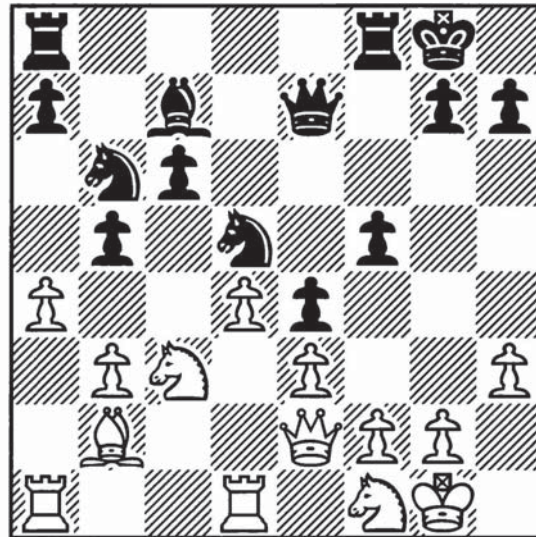


**Boris:** It was difficult to decide between permitting White to exchange knights on d5 or playing 18...b4!?.

*Joel:* How did you come to your decision?

*Boris:* The logic behind 18...♞fd5 is that both of Black's knights need the d5-square. Exchanging one pair of knights would solve the problem of having one knight unemployed (currently the knight on b6) and improve the coordination of Black's pieces. Playing 18...b4 would have deprived White's knight of good squares, but I was afraid that he would be able to redeploy it by means of ♞b1-d2-c4-e5.

**19 a4**



**Exercise:** Find the most aggressive continuation. (difficulty level 5)

*Joel:* I am tempted to play 19...b4 now, so that after 20 ♞xd5 ♞xd5, Black has the positional threat of ...♞c3, perhaps supported by ...♙a5.

*Boris:* You tried to find a positional solution. If White plays 21 ♖ac1 in response to your variation, he has counterplay, even though the position is more pleasant for Black. Another idea was 19...a6 20 axb5 axb5 (not 20...cxb5? because of 21 ♞xd5 ♞xd5 22 ♙a3 b4 23 ♚c4 and White again obtains counterplay) 21 ♖xa8 ♖xa8 22 ♖a1 ♖a1 23 ♙xa1 ♚a3 24 ♚b2 ♙d6 and Black is better, but White still has chances for defense.

Instead of these positional solutions, I chose to fight for the initiative by sacrificing a pawn and starting a direct assault on the king, after which White was unable to build a sufficient defense.

Here we are talking about several good continuations that depend on style and mood. *When we are afraid of losing our advantage, we miss our best opportunities.* This is one of the insights Alekhine had about Capablanca, which he wrote about after their World Championship match in 1927. He realized that Capablanca was not afraid to lose his advantage, and as a result, his play was more flexible.

**19...f4! 20 exf4**

White doesn't have time for 20 axb5? f3 21 ♚d2 fxg2 22 ♙xg2 (after 22 ♞g3, Black

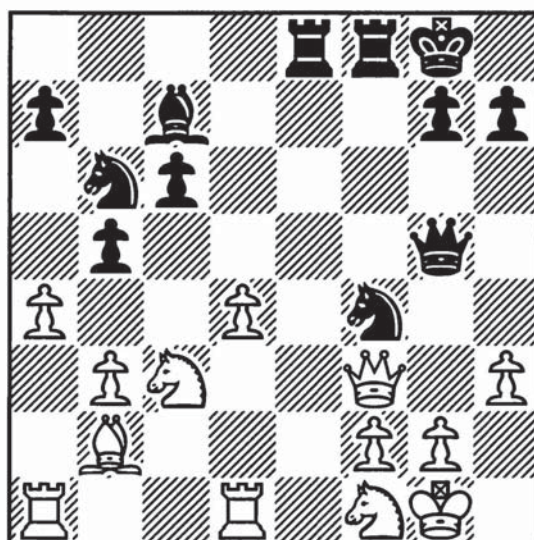


would simply play 22...♟xc3 23 ♙xc3 ♚h4, intending ...♞f3 and ...♞af8 with a crushing attack) 22...♞g5+ 23 ♟g3 ♟xc3 24 ♙xc3 (24 ♞xc3 ♞xf2+! leads to mate) 24...♞f3 and Black's attack is unstoppable.

**20...♟xf4 21 ♞xe4 ♞g5 22 ♞f3**

The only defense. White would lose after 22 ♟g3 b4! 23 ♟b1 ♞ae8 24 ♞xc6 ♟xh3+ 25 gxh3 ♙xg3 ♞e3.

**22...♞ae8**



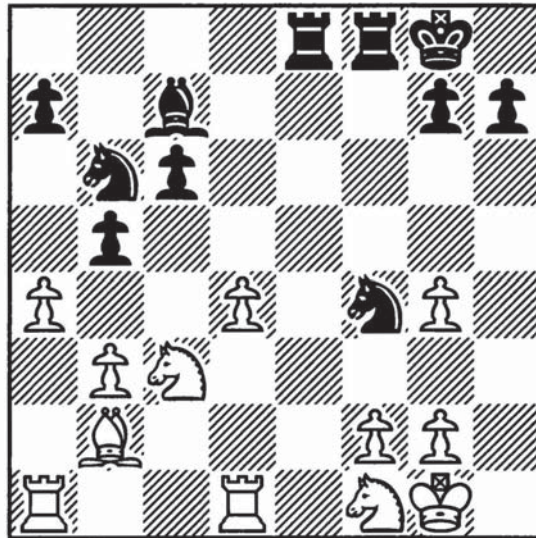
**23 ♞g4?**

*Joel:* This seems so natural; why do you think it is dubious?

*Boris:* People under attack usually try to simplify the position, but now Black is winning. Even worse was 23 ♟e4? ♞xe4 24 ♞xe4 ♟xh3+ or 23 ♟h1? ♟fd5 24 ♞g4 ♞xg4 25 hxg4 ♞xf2 and White is defenseless.

The only way to continue the struggle was 23 ♞e1!, though White's position is very difficult after 23...b4! (not 23...♟e2+? 24 ♞xe2 ♞xf3 25 ♞xe8+, when Black wins the queen but loses the advantage) 24 ♞xe8 (or 24 ♟e4 ♞h4 25 ♙c1 ♟bd5 26 ♙d2 ♙b6 with heavy pressure) 24...♞xe8 25 ♟d1 ♞g6 26 ♟de3 ♟d3.

**23...♞xg4 24 hxg4**

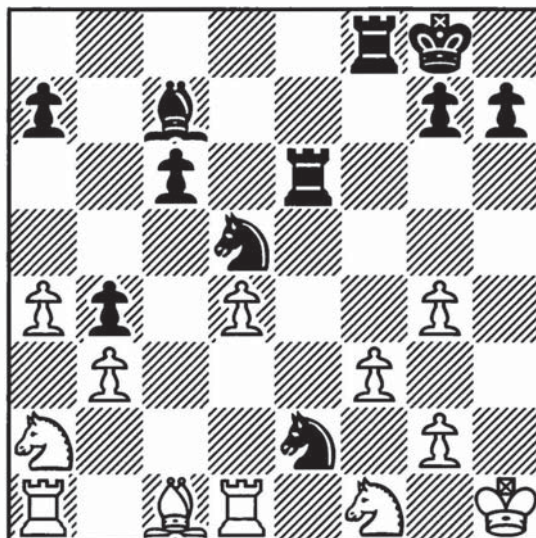


**Exercise:** How to develop the initiative? (difficulty level 2)

*Joel:* I think I would go for 24...b4, but I'm not sure whether, after 25 ♖a2 ♜e2+, I would take on f2 or play ...a7-a5.

*Boris:* Your solution is correct. After 24...b4, White's pieces lose coordination. You don't have to worry about protecting the b-pawn because in a few moves you would, I think, find more active continuations; for example, by bringing the other knight into the game with ...♞bd5.

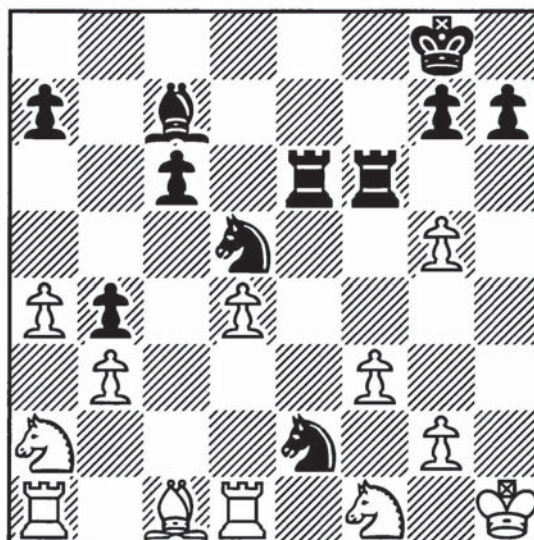
**24...b4! 25 ♖a2 ♜e2+ 26 ♔h1 ♞d5 27 f3 ♜e6 28 ♙c1**



**Exercise:** How to continue the attack? (difficulty level 3)

*Joel:* I think I would play 28...♖f4.

*Boris:* After 29 ♙xf4 ♘dxf4, White can defend with 30 g5. Instead, Black has 28...♖ff6!.  
**28...♖ff6! 29 g5**



**Exercise:** How should Black proceed? (difficulty level 2)

*Joel:* I keep trying to make 29...♖h6+ work, but it doesn't.

*Boris:* Right, don't give away your rook for nothing. You are trying to get access to the h-file. Can you see another way?

*Joel:* The only other square is f4, but I already tried that in that previous question and it didn't work, so I don't think it does now.

*Boris:* Right again, don't give away your rook for nothing. Is there another square through which you could access the h-file?

*Joel:* Only f5, but I don't see how that helps because I can't take on g5, getting access to h6, because of White's dark-squared bishop.

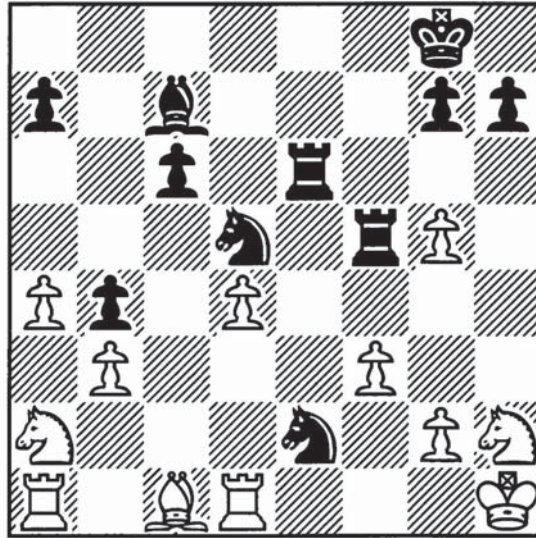
*Boris:* Perhaps you can decoy the g-pawn?

*Joel:* Ah, 29...♖f5, threatening 30...♖h6 31 gxh6 ♖h5+.

*Boris:* Correct.

**29...♖f5 30 ♘h2**





**Exercise:** Find the winning combination. (difficulty level 1)

*Joel:* Of course we can take the knight with 30...♙xh2, but can't we just follow through with our plan of 30...♖h6 - ?

*Boris:* And if 31 g4 - ?

*Joel:* 31...♖h5.

*Boris:* And after 32 f4 - ?

*Joel:* I didn't see that resource at all.

*Boris:* Yes, it looks like Black is losing in this variation. *When you see a simple win, take it. Don't try to get fancy.*

**30...♙xh2 0-1**

Here my opponent resigned in view of 31 g4 (or 31 ♙xh2 ♖h6+! etc) 31...♖xf3 32 ♙xh2 ♖f2+ 33 ♙h1 (or 33 ♙h3 ♘xc1) 33...♘g3+ 34 ♙g1 ♖ee2, followed by ...♖g2 mate.

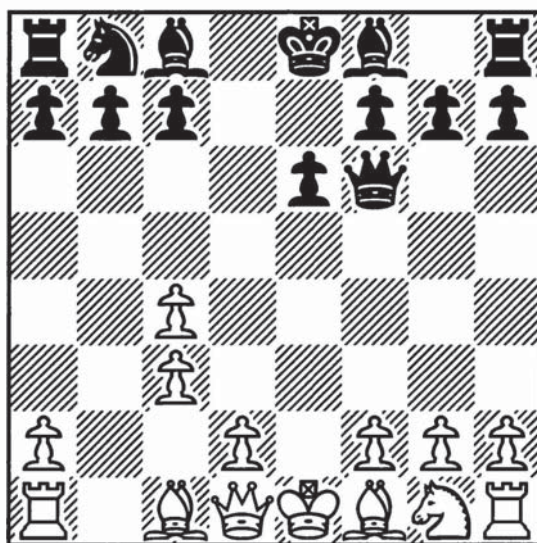
In the above game, I chose a risky and aggressive set-up, keeping in mind my very solid opponent. When choosing a strategy for a game, you must consider your opponent's style. A more aggressive player would have sacrificed the knight with 15 ♙a3!?, fighting for the initiative and forcing Black to defend.

Later on, the pawn sacrifice I played, 19...f4!, required intuitive evaluation and calculation. In the next game we will discuss the more difficult topic of the positional pawn sacrifice in the struggle for the initiative.

Game 9  
B.Gulko-R.Hübner  
Polanica Zdroj 1996  
English Opening

**Boris:** In my game with Peev, I obtained the initiative for free, while in the two other games of this chapter I had to sacrifice a pawn in order to obtain it. In this one, we see a struggle for the initiative in an approximately equal position.

**1 c4** ♖f6 **2** ♘c3 e6 **3 e4** d5 **4 e5** d4 **5 exf6** dxc3 **6 bxc3** ♜xf6



**7 d4**

At the time of the game, this continuation was the main line. Now, however, 7 ♖f3 e5 8 ♙d3 is more popular.

**Joel:** That looks strange. What's the idea?

**Boris:** To bring the bishop to e4 and play d2-d4 later. White switched to this plan because the theory of the main line with 7 d4 promised Black good chances. As a result, White had to find new ways.

**7...b6**

The critical move is 7...e5, after which it is very difficult for White to achieve any advantage. The move in the game is also very solid.

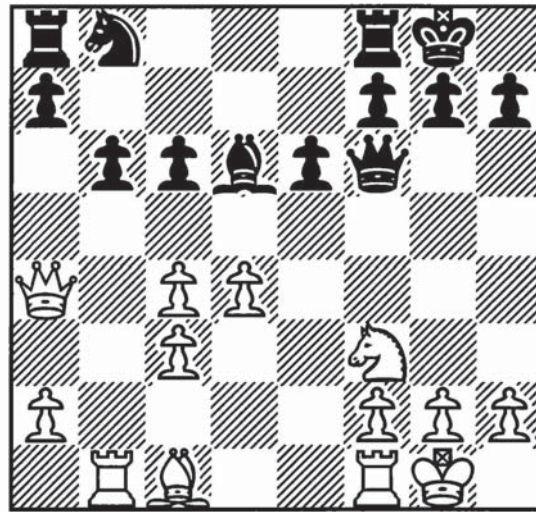
**8 ♙e2**

Theory at that time recommended 8 ♖f3 ♙b7 9 ♙d3 ♙xf3 (9...♘d7? is a trap with a well-known mechanism that can happen in different openings: 10 ♙g5 ♙xf3 11 ♜d2! and Black loses his queen) 10 ♜xf3 ♜xf3 11 gxf3, but I believe the pawn structure makes it very difficult for White to take advantage of his bishop pair. The move in the game leads to a more complicated struggle.

**8...♙b7 9 ♙f3!?**

After the standard 9  $\text{♟f3}$ , the black bishop on b7 is more useful than the white bishop on e2.

9... $\text{♟xf3}$  10  $\text{♞xf3}$   $\text{♟d6}$  11  $\text{♚a4+!}$  c6 12 0-0 0-0 13  $\text{♞b1}$



13... $\text{♟c7!}$ ?

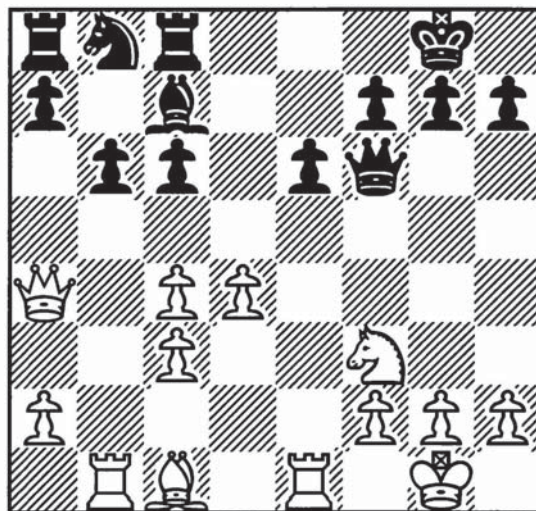
Joel: Can you explain this move?

Boris: White threatened  $\text{♞xb6}$ , so Black protects it. Retreating the queen would have been worse, as after 13... $\text{♚d8}$  14  $\text{♞g5!}$ , White takes the initiative: For example:

a) 14... $\text{♚c7}$  15  $\text{♚c2!}$  g6 16  $\text{♚e4}$   $\text{♞d7}$  (16... $\text{♟xh2+?!}$  17  $\text{♚h1}$   $\text{♟d6}$  18  $\text{♚h4}$  h5 19 g4 gives White a strong attack) 17  $\text{♚h4}$  and Black is under pressure.

b) 14... $\text{♟e7}$  15 f4!?  $\text{♚c7}$  (or 15...g6 16  $\text{♞f3}$  with attacking chances) 16 f5 and White's position is preferable.

14  $\text{♞e1}$   $\text{♞c8}$



**Exercise:** Can White take the initiative with 15 d5 - ? (difficulty level 2)



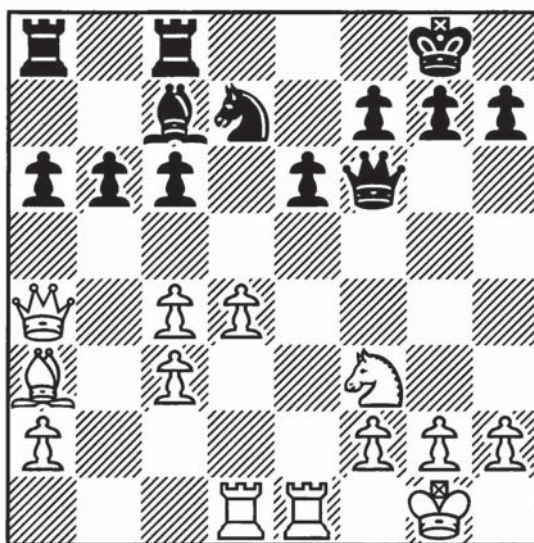
*Joel:* I think 15 d5 helps Black untie himself. For example, 15...cxd5 16 cxd5 exd5 and Black can bring his knight out to c6, which your move ♖a4 prevented. Therefore, I'd prefer 15 ♙g5.

*Boris:* Unfortunately, in your variation you overlooked mate on e8!

*Joel:* A typical oversight.

*Boris:* My first intention was to play 15 d5, taking the initiative, *but you have to deserve the initiative and my opponent didn't do anything wrong*. In other words, White has not outplayed Black in any way, so he didn't deserve the initiative yet. Here, 15 d5? can be refuted by 15...♚f5, attacking the rook on b1 and the pawn on d5.

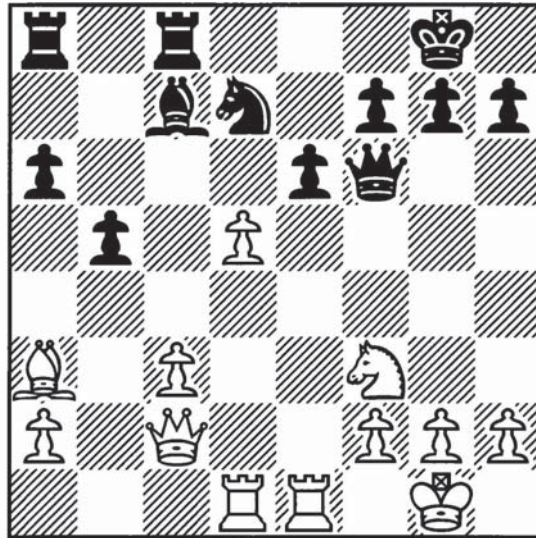
**15 ♙a3 ♘d7 16 ♖bd1 a6!**



**Exercise:** How can White fight for initiative? (difficulty level 3)

*Joel:* I'd play 17 d5 because the c-pawn is pinned.

*Boris:* Your recommendation is correct, but my reasoning was different. If I allow Black to play ...b6-b5 and ...♘b6, he will take over the initiative and I will be worse. Therefore, I have to play aggressively in order not to be at a disadvantage. Conversely, if Black doesn't fight for the initiative himself with 16...a6, but instead maneuvers quietly with 16...♘f8?!, White will obtain the advantage after 17 ♙xf8 ♚xf8 18 ♘e5 ♙xe5 19 dxe5 ♚e7 20 ♖d6. **17 d5! b5 18 ♚c2 cxd5 19 cxd5**



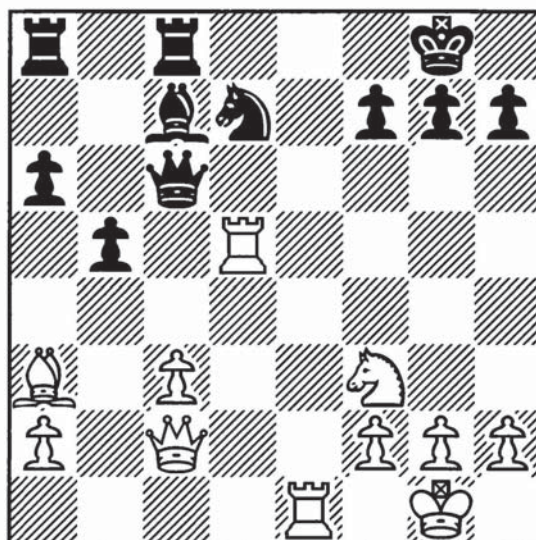
**Exercise:** What should Black do? (difficulty level 4)

### 19...exd5?!

*Boris:* After the game continuation, White's pieces become active and he enjoys a slight initiative. Black had to keep the position closed with 19...e5! 20 c4 (here 20 d6?! ♠a5 21 ♜e3 b4? 22 ♜a4 would be bad for Black, but after 21...♜c4! 22 ♘d2 ♜a4, it is White who is in danger) 20...♠d6 (both 20...♠a5 21 ♜e4 and 20...bxc4 21 ♜e4 are better for White) 21 ♠xd6! ♜xd6 22 ♜e2, when the game will fade out into a draw.

### 20 ♜xd5 ♜c6

Black would be in danger after 20...♘b6 21 ♜f5 ♜g6 22 ♜e4! (not 22 ♘h4? due to 22...♜e8, exploiting the weakness of White's back rank); for example, 22...♘c4 23 ♠c5 ♠a5 24 ♘g5 ♠xc3 25 ♘xf7 with strong threats such as 26 ♜d5.





**Exercise:** Should White fight for the initiative by playing 21 ♖g5 - ? Calculate variations. (difficulty level 5)

**Joel:** First, 21... ♗xd5 22 ♖xh7 is mate, so the rook cannot be taken. Black has 21... ♗h6 possibly, but 22 ♖xh7+ ♖xh7+ 23 ♘xh7 looks good for White, because if 23... ♘b6 then 24 ♖h5. The most logical reply is 21... ♘f6, which seems good to me; for example, 22 ♖f5 g6 23 ♖c5 ♗d6 threatening mate. Therefore, I think the answer is that White shouldn't try to take the initiative with 21 ♘g5.

**Boris:** This position is very difficult to calculate and you made several mistakes. After 21... ♗h6, 22 ♖xh7 ♖xh7 23 ♘xh7 doesn't deserve attention because 23... ♘b6 24 ♖h5 ♖e8 gives Black a serious initiative. He can play ...f7-f6 and the knight is unable to return from h7. After 21... ♗h6, it is better for White to play 22 ♖xd7 ♙xh2+ 23 ♙f1 ♖xg5 24 ♖e4 with a strong initiative.

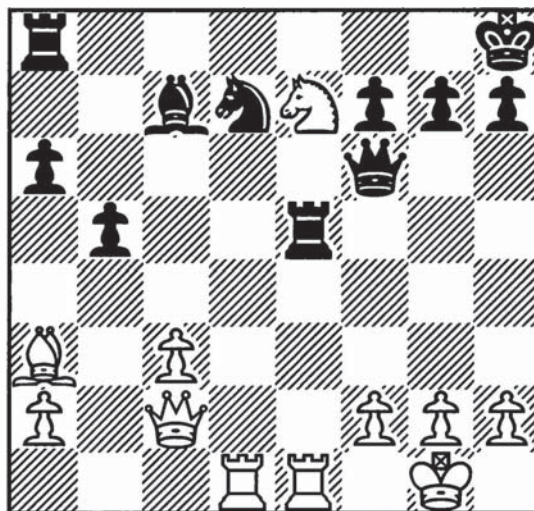
**Joel:** How so?

**Boris:** White is threatening 25 ♖xf7 ♙xf7 26 ♖e6 mate. You're right that 21... ♘f6 is better, except that after 22 ♖f5, Black should play ...♖e8! (your suggestion of 22...g6? loses to 23 ♖b3, and if 23...gxf5 then 24 ♖xf7+ ♙h8 25 ♖e7 ♖g8 26 ♖xh7+ ♘xh7 27 ♖xh7 mate) 23 ♙e7 ♗d6! and if 24 ♖fe5 then 24... ♖xe7! 25 ♖xe7 ♖xh2+ 26 ♙f1 ♖h1+ 27 ♙e2 ♖h5+ 28 ♘f3 ♙d6 with strong play for the sacrificed exchange.

**21 ♖dd1! ♖e8 22 ♘d4 ♖f6 23 ♘f5 ♖e5!**

**Boris:** In the case of 23... ♘e5 24 ♖e4, White would be very active. During the game I thought I had already taken over the initiative, but my opponent found an excellent defensive move in 23... ♖e5!.

**24 ♘e7+ ♙h8**



**Exercise:** How can White continue to fight for the initiative? (difficulty level 3)



**Joel:** I liked 25 ♖d5. After 25...♙xe1 26 ♖xe1 ♙xh2+ 27 ♔xh2, both d6 and e5 are covered, so it looks like it works.

**Boris:** 25 ♖d5 doesn't promise anything because of 25...♚e6 26 ♖xe5 ♙xe5 and Black's position even is more pleasant. Instead, White sacrifices a pawn, trying to decentralize Black's pieces.

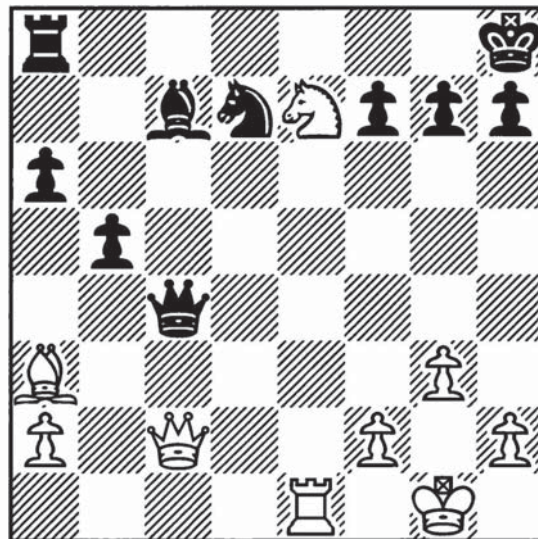
**25 c4! ♖xe1+!?**

Black has to take up the challenge because after the alternative 25...♙a5?! 26 ♖xe5 ♖xe5 27 cxb5 axb5 28 ♚e4 ♖e8 29 ♙c5!, White's position is much better.

**Joel:** Can you say why?

**Boris:** Black's pieces are very poorly coordinated here, and White has the potential threat of f2-f4, followed by a check on g6.

**26 ♖xe1 ♚h4 27 g3 ♚xc4**

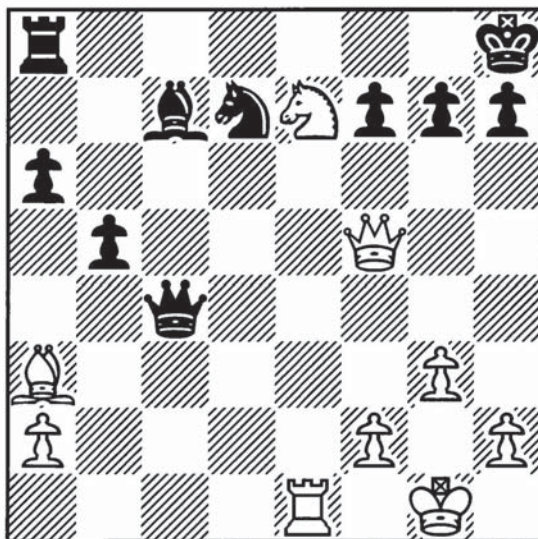


**Exercise:** How to develop the initiative now? (difficulty level 3)

**Joel:** I liked the move 28 ♚d2, threatening ♖ec1 and the knight on d7. I also looked at 28 ♚f5 but rejected it because, after 28...♖f6 29 ♖c1 ♚a4, there are mutual threats.

**Boris:** You made useful work. *Training yourself to calculate in complicated positions is important.* However, you made several mistakes in your calculations. After 28 ♚d2, you missed 28...♖e5!, threatening 29...♖f3+. The correct move is 28 ♚f5. You rejected it because you didn't see the mate on c8. After your line 28...♖f6 29 ♖c1 ♚a4, White can play 30 ♖xc7, when 30...♚xa3 31 ♖c8+ leads to mate. In such positions, *when there is a back rank weakness, it has to become a reflex to check for back rank mates.* So we can conclude that, by winning the pawn, Black ceded the initiative to White.

**28 ♚f5!**

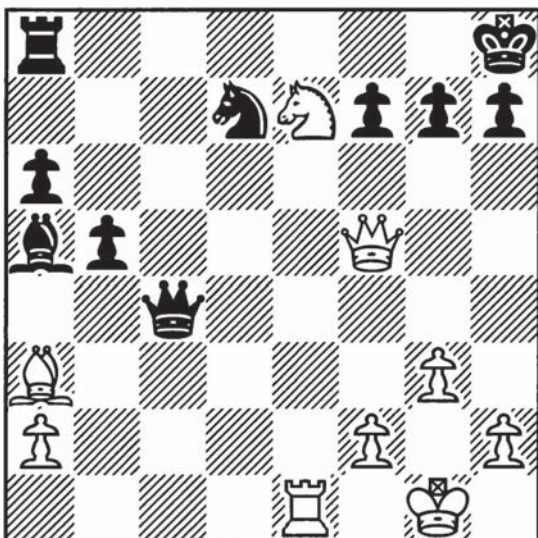


**Exercise:** How can Black save the game? (difficulty level 5)

*Joel:* Well, as you've just shown, 28...Qf6 is no good because of 29 Rxc1, but 28...Qc3 looks good, double attacking e1 and a3. If White plays 29 Rxc1 here, then 29...Qxa3 30 Rxc7 Qxe7 31 Rxd7 Qe1+ 32 Kg2 Re8 seems okay.

*Boris:* Your suggestion of 28...Qc3(?) was actually my opponent's choice, which we will return to below. First, let's look at other options:

a) 28...Qa5



**Exercise:** Find the win. (difficulty level 1)

*Joel:* 29 Re4 wins.

*Boris:* And after 29...♖xa2 - ?

*Joel:* 30 ♜xh7+ ♔xh7 31 ♜h4 mate.

*Boris:* Very good – a typical idea and an important one to find at the board.

b) 28...♗f8 is no good either, due to 29 ♜f3 (protecting the bishop on a3) 29...♞d8 30 ♞c1, winning.

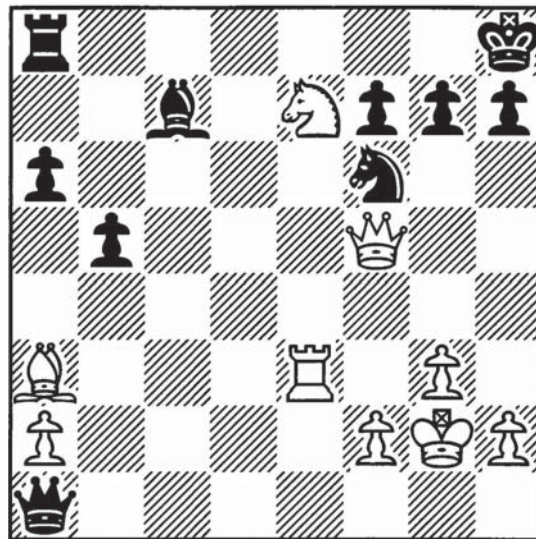
To save the game Black had to sacrifice a piece in order to seize the initiative:

c) 28...♜xa2! 29 ♜xd7 ♙b6 30 ♜f1 ♜xa3 31 ♘c8! ♙xf2+! 32 ♔g2 (not 32 ♜xf2? ♜c1+ and Black is winning) 32...♜f8 33 ♘d6 ♔g8 34 ♜xf2 ♞d8 35 ♜xf7+ ♜xf7 36 ♘xf7 ♞d5! 37 h4 h6! and now my knight cannot return, so my extra piece doesn't give me an advantage. The wisest course for White is to force a draw with 38 ♘h6+ gxh6 39 ♞f6.

It is not surprising that Black, who suddenly found himself under pressure with the character of the position having changed rapidly, did not find this escape. After the game continuation, Black's pieces suffer a catastrophic loss of coordination.

**28...♜c3? 29 ♜e3 ♜a1+ 30 ♔g2 ♗f6**

Even worse was 30...♗e5? 31 ♘d5 ♗c4 32 ♞e7 ♙d6 33 ♙xd6 ♘xd6 34 ♜d7 and White wins easily.



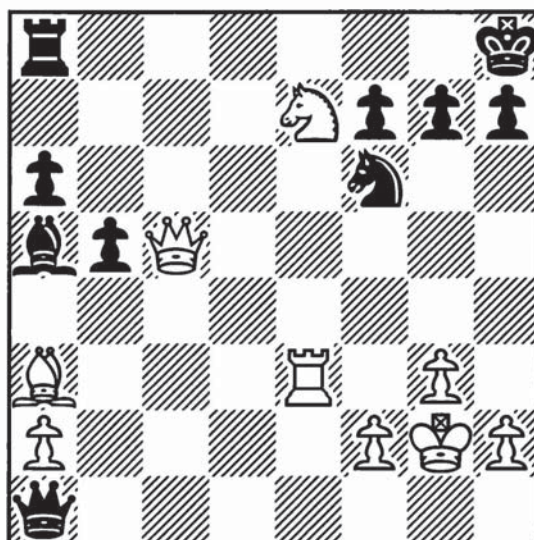
**Exercise:** What should White play? (difficulty level 3)

*Joel:* I would play 31 ♜c5. Where does his bishop go but to a5? I hold all my pieces, and his back rank is weak.

*Boris:* You're right, but 31...♙a5 is not the only move. You had to also consider 31...♗g4 32 ♞e2 ♜d1, which is met by 33 ♜c6! ♜f8 34 ♜c2! ♜d8 (34...♜xc2 35 ♜xc2 ♙a5 36 ♗g6+ was no better for Black) 35 f3 ♗f6 (or 35...♗e5 36 ♜xe5 ♙xe5 37 ♗c6 ♜c8 38 ♙xf8 and White is a piece up) 36 ♗c6 and White wins the exchange.

**31 ♜c5! ♙a5**





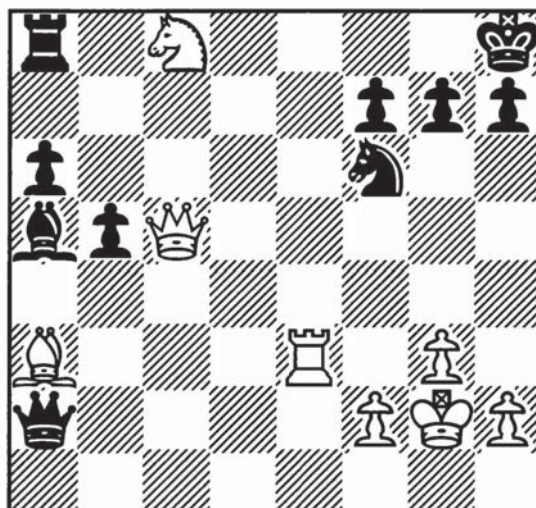
**Exercise:** Now the bishop is on a5. What to do next? (difficulty level 3)

**Joel:** 32 ♖c8!, blocking the back rank.

**Boris:** Correct. It is important not to allow Black to coordinate his pieces. Now the rook is cut off.

**32 ♖c8! h6**

In the case of 32...♙xa2:



**Exercise:** Find the win. (difficulty level 1)

**Joel:** 33 ♜e8 ♘g8 34 ♜f8 and wins.

**Boris:** No. In your variation, Black can play 34...f6, protecting the knight on g8; but you had a mate in two with 34 ♜xg8+ ♔xg8 35 ♜f8 mate. The same kind of combination fol-

lows after 33 ♖f8+ ♜g8 34 ♖xg8+ ♜xg8 35 ♚e8 mate.

**33 ♖c6! ♜b8 34 ♙d6 ♜xc8 35 ♖xc8+ ♜h7 36 ♖f5+**

White missed the opportunity to trap the black queen after 36 ♖c2+! ♜g8 37 ♙e5, but my desire to keep my queen closer to Black's king is understandable.

**36...♜g8**

After 36...g6 37 ♖f3, Black cannot defend against 38 ♙e5, winning.

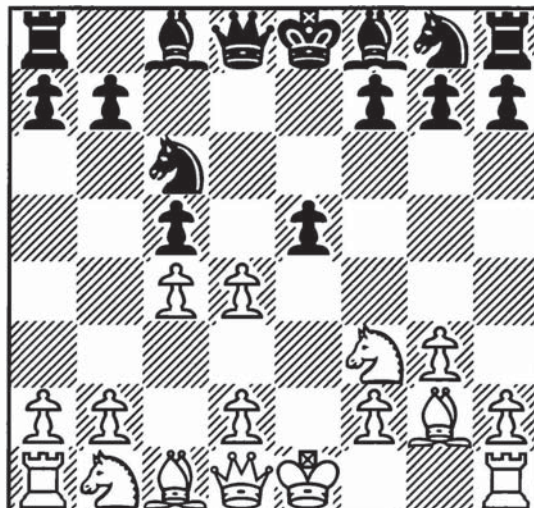
**37 ♙e5 ♖xa2 38 ♙xf6 gxf6 39 ♚e8+ ♜g7 40 ♖g4+ 1-0**

*Boris:* In this game the position was close to equal for a long time. White eventually obtained the initiative by sacrificing a pawn, and Black was unable to find the narrow path to salvation. Instead, his pieces suffered a fatal loss of coordination.

Ratmir Kholmov was one of the strongest Soviet grandmasters during the best years of Soviet chess. In 1963, he tied for first with Spassky and Stein in the Soviet Championship. Because he was not a favorite son of the Soviet authorities, he didn't travel abroad much. One of the highlights of his career was his victory over Fischer at the Capablanca Memorial in Havana 1965. He won three brilliancy prizes in the Soviet championships and two of them (against Keres and Bronstein) are among the most beautiful games ever played! He was not an opening theorist so he often had to defend, which earned him the nickname *The Central Defender*. In the following game, therefore, I had to overcome a very stubborn defense in order to win.

Game 10  
R.Kholmov-B.Gulko  
Tbilisi 1976  
Réti Opening

**1 ♜f3 c5 2 g3 ♜c6 3 ♙g2 d5 4 c4 d4 5 e3 e5 6 exd4**



**Exercise:** Find the most dynamic, aggressive continuation. (difficulty level 3)

**Joel:** I'm wondering whether you can play some sort of reversed Benoni and take back with the c-pawn. It doesn't seem immediately the most aggressive move, but I like these positions and they lead to interesting dynamic games. I would follow with moves like ...♘f6, ...♙d6, ...0-0, and ...a7-a5, in order to keep White's queenside from expanding.

**Boris:** Try to find the most aggressive moves that cause your opponent immediate problems, not just natural moves. You need to seize the opportunity to attack.

**Joel:** Well then, I guess 6...e4, but I worry about losing the pawn.

**Boris:** When you fight for the initiative you have to take some risk (of course, calculated risk). You have to check. How will you lose the pawn?

**Joel:** 7 ♖e2 and when White moves the knight, the pawn will be loose.

**Boris:** Okay, so what would you play after 7 ♖e2 - ?

**Joel:** Probably 7...♘f6.

**Boris:** That doesn't keep up the threat to White's knight. How can you keep up the threat – that is, unpin the pawn – and protect e4?

**Joel:** 7...♗e7 seems right.

**Boris:** Right, and now White's position looks suspicious. He can't play 8 ♘e5, for example, due to 8...♘xd4 9 ♖xe4 ♙f5, followed by ...♘c2+. So 6...e4 gives Black the chance to fight for the initiative. It is now clear that White had to play 6 d3 in order to prevent the black pawn from getting to e4. As I said, sometimes Kholmov was not accurate in the opening.

**6...e4! 7 ♘e5 ♘xd4 8 ♖a4+**

White rushes for an endgame because otherwise the knight on e5 will be vulnerable; for example, after 8 0-0 ♙d6. Note that 8 ♙xe4? would be a mistake in view of 8...♗e7 9 f4 f6 and Black wins a piece.

**8...♙d7 9 ♖xd7+ ♗xd7 10 ♘xd7 ♙xd7 11 ♙d1**

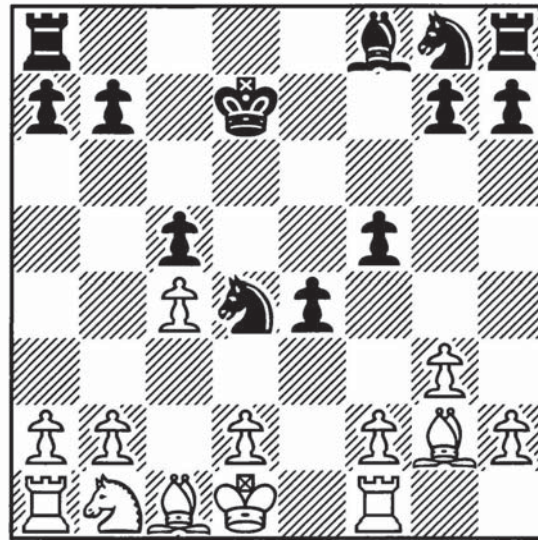
An ambitious plan; White aims to provoke ...f7-f5, exchange the e4-pawn with f2-f3, and bring his knight from b1 to d5. To combat this, Black has to play very aggressively. It would have been safer to play 11 ♘a3, followed by d2-d3, but grandmasters prefer not to develop their knights to the edge of the board.

**Joel:** But there are many openings, such as the English or Catalan, where White develops his knight to a3; or in the King's Indian Defense, where Black develops his knight to a6.

**Boris:** In those openings, the knight has the plan of reaching the c4-square (for White) or the c5-square (for Black). Here, developing the knight to a3 would leave it without good prospects.

**11...f5 12 ♗f1**





**Exercise:** What is Black's most aggressive option? (difficulty level 5)

*Joel:* I'm not sure. I keep looking at 12...♘f6 or 12...g6, but while they look okay, those moves don't seem very aggressive.

*Boris:* Right. Can you try to use White's last move against him?

*Joel:* Perhaps a kingside pawn storm starting with 12...g5 - ?

*Boris:* All that does is create weaknesses. White will simply play 13 f3. Note that White's rook abandoned the h-file with his last move.

*Joel:* Ahhh, Now I see that it must be 12...h5!

*Boris:* Right. *You have to use the opportunities your opponents give you.* Here, he abandons the h-file, so you play to open it up.

**12...h5!**

White hoped, after the natural 12...♘f6, to release his position with 13 f3. The move 12...h5 plays against this idea.

**13 ♘c3**

In the case of 14 f3 h4 15 fxe4 hxg3 16 hxg3 ♖h2, White is in trouble.

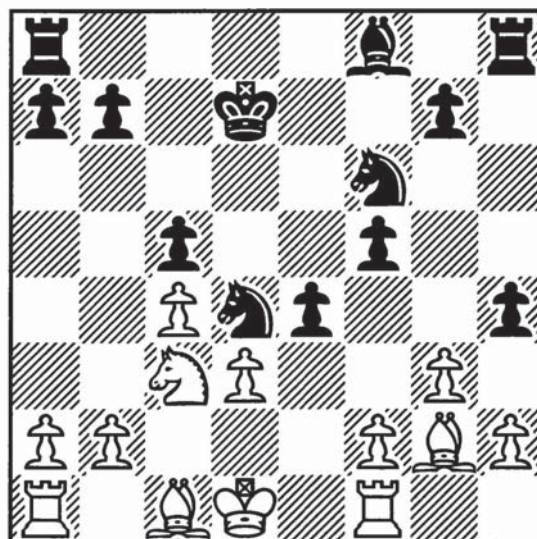
*Joel:* That's the difference between playing 12...h5 and 12...♘f6.

*Boris:* Right. Now White has to abandon the idea of playing f2-f3.

*Joel:* So you rendered ♖hf1 a waste of time?

*Boris:* Yes. If White tries to keep the h-file closed with 13 h4, his plan of f2-f3 will still be impossible, since the g-pawn hangs after ...♙d6.

**13...♘f6 14 d3 h4**

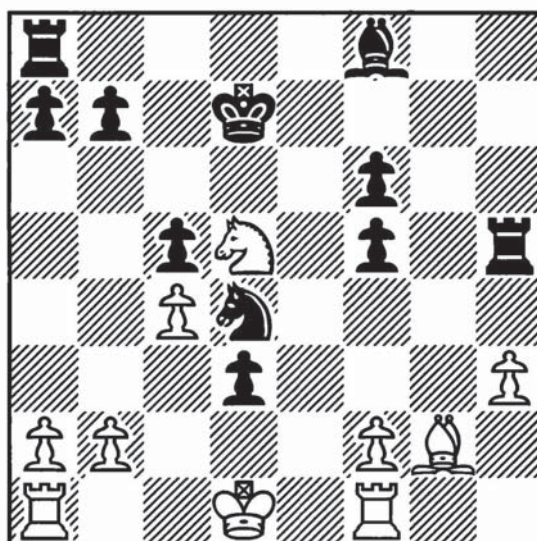


### 15 gxh4?!

White reasonably decided to prevent the black rook from penetrating to h2, because in the case of 15 dxe4 hxg3 16 hxg3 ♖h2 17 ♙g1 ♜g4!, Black has a strong initiative; for example, after 18 ♙e3 ♜e8 or 18 f3 ♜f2+ 19 ♙e1 ♜h3 20 ♙h1 ♜xg2 21 ♙xh3 fxe4! 22 fxe4 ♙d6.

But White could protect his second rank move cleverly by playing 15 dxe4 hxg3 16 h3!, and after 16...♜xe4 17 ♜xe4 fxe4 18 fxg3 ♜e8, the position would be approximately equal. **15...♙xh4 16 h3 exd3 17 ♙g5 ♙h5 18 ♙xf6 gxf6 19 ♜d5?!**

White could reclaim the d3-pawn by playing 19 ♙d2! ♙h6+ 20 ♙xd3 ♜g8 21 ♜d5! ♜g6 with an inferior but defensible position. My opponent thought he could regain the pawn at any moment, but the game shows that it is not so easy.

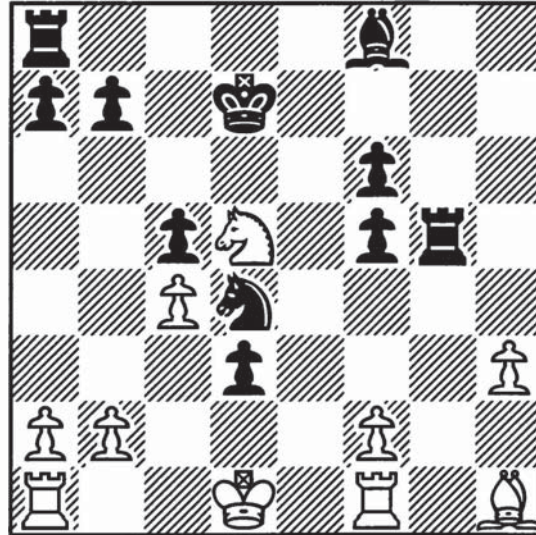


**Exercise:** How to maintain the initiative? (difficulty level 4)

Joel: The right move seems to be 19...♖g5.

Boris: Correct! The f6-pawn is not important; you have to increase the energy of your pieces.

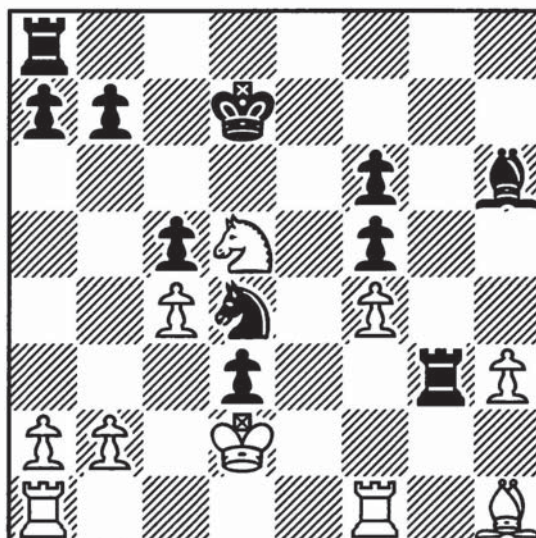
19...♖g5! 20 ♖h1



**Exercise:** Find the most important idea in this position and how to implement it. (difficulty level 4)

Joel: I think it is important to keep White's king in the center and on the back rank, where it interferes with the coordination of his rooks. The only move that does this is 20...♖h6, and if 21 ♖d2 then 21...♖g3+.

Boris: Absolutely correct! Your solution allows Black to keep his pawn on d3. 20...♖h6! 21 ♖d2 ♖g3+ 22 f4





**Exercise:** Again, what is the most important idea and how can Black achieve it? (difficulty level 5)

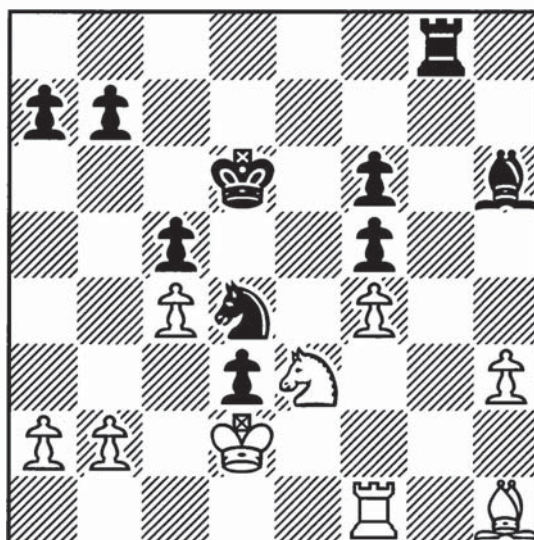
**Joel:** I think Black needs to bring his other rook in the game. I'd like to put it on e8, threatening ... $\text{R}e2+$ , but I can't do that immediately because of  $23 \text{ } \text{N}xf6+$ . So I think something subtle like  $22... \text{Q}d6$  is what I would play.

**Boris:** Excellent!

**22...  $\text{Q}d6$ ! 23  $\text{R}ae1 \text{ R}ag8$**

It is natural for humans to prevent counterplay; here Black takes full control of the g-file. However, it was possible to play  $23... \text{R}xh3$ , since  $24 \text{ R}g1?$  can be met by  $24... \text{N}c2!$  and Black is winning, because  $25 \text{ R}e7$  is impossible on account of  $25... \text{N}xf4+$ .

**24  $\text{R}e3 \text{ R}xe3$  25  $\text{N}xe3$**



**Exercise:** What should Black play and why? (difficulty level 5)

**Joel:** I would like protect the d3-pawn, but I don't see how. If I play something like  $25... \text{R}g3$  White can just go  $26 \text{ Q}xd3$ .

**Boris:** Can he?

**Joel:** I don't see how to prevent it.

**Boris:** What tactical idea is operating?

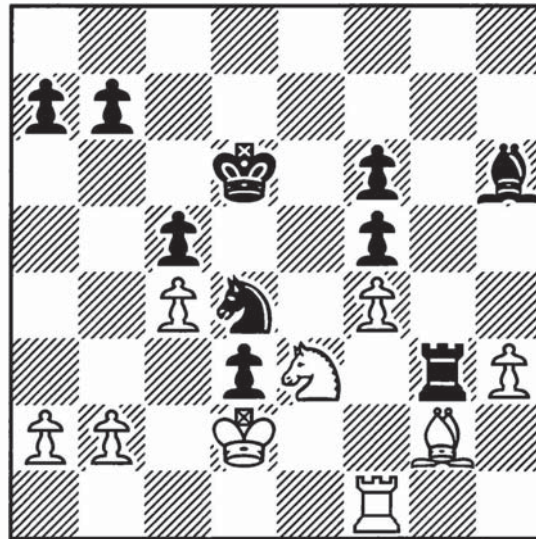
**Joel:** Well, there is a pin on the knight.

**Boris:** Right. How can you use it?

**Joel:** Not sure. Maybe  $26... \text{N}e6$  - ?

**Boris:** No, then after  $27 \text{ Q}d2$  you cannot play  $27... \text{N}xf4$  because White has  $28 \text{ R}xf4 \text{ N}xf4$   $29 \text{ N}xf5+$ , winning. The correct solution is  $26... \text{N}xf4$   $27 \text{ R}xf4 \text{ Q}e5$   $28 \text{ R}f1 f4$   $29 \text{ R}e1 \text{ R}xh3$   $30 \text{ N}xb7 \text{ N}f5$  and Black is winning.

25...♖g3! 26 ♔g2



**Exercise:** Try to find a way to attack. (difficulty level 5)

*Joel:* Can you play 26...♔xf4 anyway with the same idea as before?

*Boris:* Unfortunately it doesn't work in this case. After 27 ♖xf4 ♔e5 28 ♖f2, the move ...f5-f4 is not dangerous because the bishop on g2 is protected.

*Joel:* Can I play something like 26...♔d7 - ?

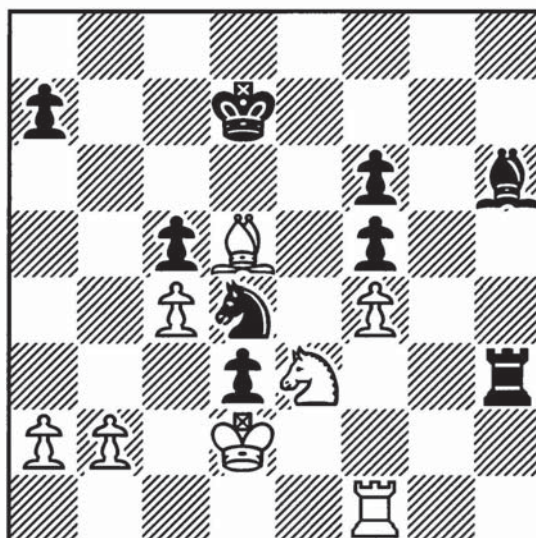
*Boris:* Yes! It is a funny move: before you had to play ...♔d7-d6 in order to develop the rook on a8, and now you have to play ...♔d6-d7 in order to release the knight from the defense of f5.

By playing 26 ♔g2, White hopes to build an impenetrable fortress, but after Black's next move, his fortress begins to crack. Instead, he might have taken on b7 at once, when computer analysis reveals that White doesn't lose after 26 ♔xb7 ♖xh3 27 ♔xd3 ♔xf4 28 ♖xf4 ♔e5 29 ♔g2 ♖g3 30 ♖h4 f4 31 ♖h3 ♖xh3 32 ♔xh3 fxe3 33 ♔xe3 f5, since Black's advantage is probably not enough to win.

**26...♔d7! 27 ♔xb7**

After 27 ♔xd3 ♔e6, White's position is bad.

**27...♖xh3 28 ♔d5**



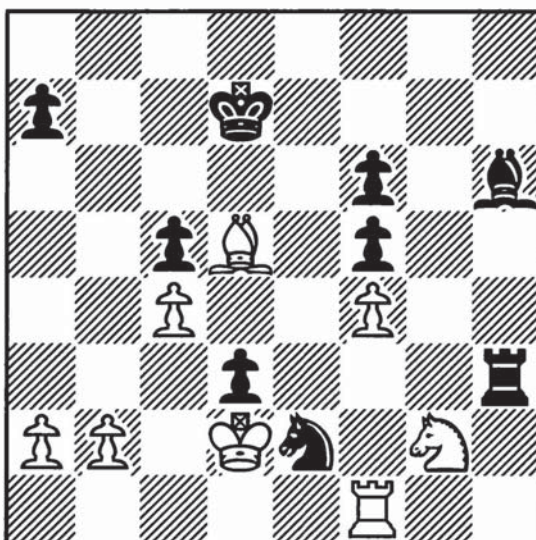
**Exercise:** How to continue the assault? (difficulty level 3)

*Joel:* Can I play 28...♖e2 - ?

*Boris:* Yes! Black has to get rid of the f4-pawn, which is the main pillar of White's fortress. Kholmov's move tries to prevent the black knight from attacking the f4-pawn from e6, but the knight finds a different route to accomplish its task. The simple 28 ♔xd3 was stronger, as after 28...♖e6 29 ♜h1 ♖xf4+ 30 ♔c2! ♜xh1 31 ♙xh1 ♖e6, White has drawing chances in this endgame.

**28...♖e2! 29 ♖g2**

My opponent was known as the best defender in Soviet chess, so he continues to find only moves. 29 ♔xd3? would lose to 29...♖xf4+ 30 ♔d2 ♖xd5.





**Exercise:** White has built a defense. How can Black increase the pressure? (difficulty level 5)

Joel: I'm not sure.

Boris: Which piece is not participating in the attack?

Joel: The king.

Boris: Correct.

Joel: So maybe walk the king around to the kingside? I feel White is in zugzwang sort of.

Boris: Not exactly zugzwang, but yes, his pieces are operating at their maximum capacity in terms of defense. Black's king cannot penetrate on the kingside because, even if he could reach the h5-square, White would have ♔f3+, pushing him back.

Joel: What about 29...♔d6, threatening 30...♖xf4 and 31...♔e5 - ?

Boris: That is very interesting and maybe even better than what I played in the game! I chose 29...♔c7 with the idea of bringing the king to b4. Your way is more direct. Very good!

**29...♔c7! 30 ♖f2 ♔b6 31 ♔f3 ♖d4 32 ♔d5 ♖e2 33 ♔f3 ♖xf4!**

Black doesn't need to fear an opposite-colored bishop ending thanks to the weakness of the dark squares in White's camp, which is crucial because rooks are on the board. Without rooks, it would be a draw. Taking with the bishop would have been much worse: after 33...♔xf4+ 34 ♖xf4 ♖xf4 35 ♔d1 ♖h4 36 ♔e3 ♖g6 37 ♖xf5, the position suddenly becomes equal; knights in the endgame are very often much weaker than bishops.

**34 ♖xf4 ♔xf4+ 35 ♔xd3 ♔e5 36 b3**

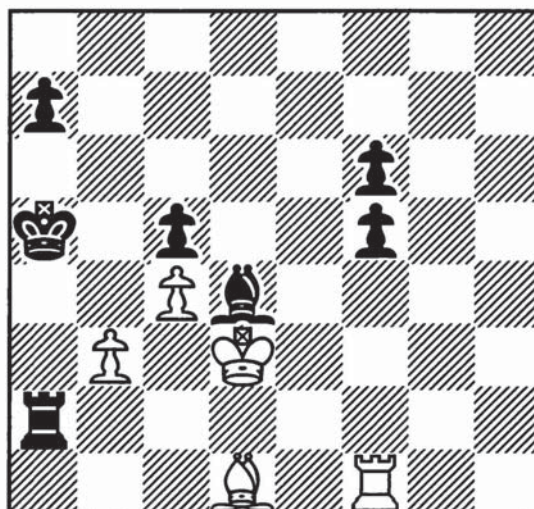
36 ♔c2 ♔d4 37 ♖f1 ♖h2+ was bad for White, but after the game continuation the black king has a path into White's camp.

**36...♔d4 37 ♖f1 ♔a5! 38 ♔e2**

Joel: What about 38 a3 - ? Most people would naturally try to keep the king out.

Boris: White does not succeed after 38...♔b2.

**38...♖h2+ 39 ♔d3 ♖xa2 40 ♔d1**



**Exercise:** Find the weakness in White's defense and how Black can increase the pressure. (difficulty level 2)

**Joel:** The pawn on b3 is weak. The natural move is to play ...♙b4, but I don't think that is as good as pinning the bishop with 40...♞a1 first.

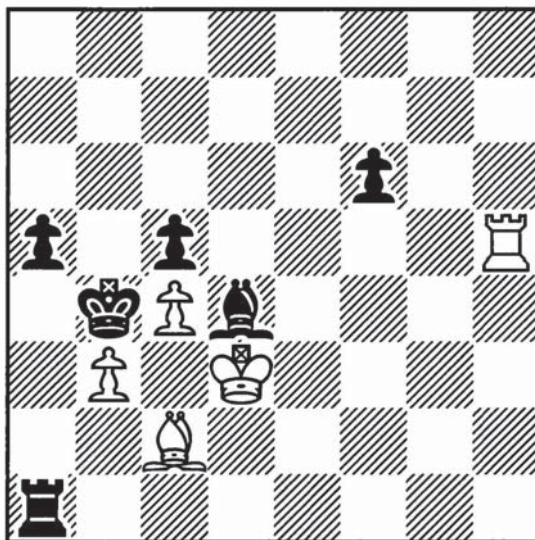
**Boris:** Very good! You've identified Black's main target and found a way to gain a tempo by pinning the bishop.

**40...♞a1! 41 ♙e2 ♞a3 42 ♙d1 ♙b4 43 ♞xf5 a5 44 ♞h5 ♞a1**

Here Black has a winning combination already: 44...♞xb3+ 45 ♙xb3 ♙xb3 46 ♞h8 ♙c3, when Black is prepared to block any checks with his bishop and the a-pawn cannot be stopped. The move in the game is not worse, though.

**45 ♙c2**

In the case of 45 ♙c2, Black has to sacrifice the exchange after all: 45...♞xd1 46 ♙xd1 ♙xb3 47 ♞h8 ♙c3 and the a-pawn will be unstoppable.

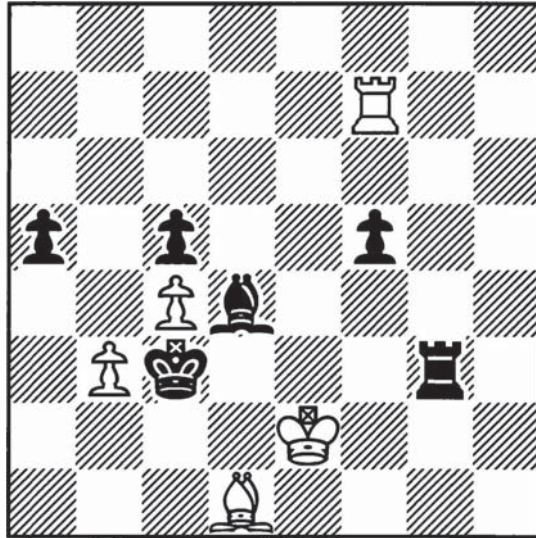


**Exercise:** What is Black's plan? (difficulty level 2)

**Joel:** I'd like to bring my rook over to the other side with something like 45...♞g1 and try to infiltrate White's camp further.

**Boris:** Correct.

**45...♞g1! 46 ♞h7 ♞g3+ 47 ♙d2 ♙e3+ 48 ♙e2 ♙c3 49 ♙d1 f5 50 ♞d7 ♙d4 51 ♞f7**



**Exercise:** Find the win. (difficulty level 3)

*Joel:* I would play 51...♖e3+ 52 ♔f1 ♕d2 53 ♙h5 ♗g3 with mate to follow.

*Boris:* Very good.

**51...♖e3+! 52 ♔f1 ♕d2 0-1**

*Boris:* The strong 6...e4! created a weakness in White's dark squares, which allowed Black to maintain the initiative throughout the game until, eventually, a mating net was organized around White's king. This game demonstrates how important it is not to miss opportunities to take over the initiative, as you might only be given one chance.



## Chapter Four

# Problems around Counterplay

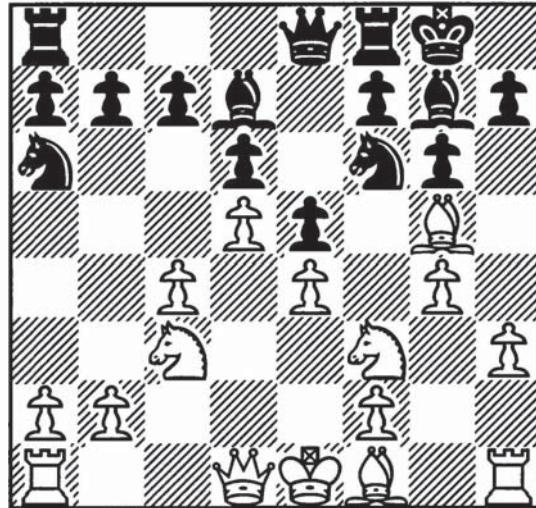
A game in which you have the initiative and your opponent has no counterplay is pure pleasure, but it doesn't happen often because it requires your opponent's cooperation. You will hardly ever find games between strong players where they cede the initiative to their opponent without the prospect of counterplay. In this chapter we'll consider different scenarios in the struggle between the initiative and counterplay.

### Game 11 B.Gulko-R.Mainka Vienna 1991 *King's Indian Defense*

**1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 ♙g7 4 e4 d6 5 ♘f3 0-0 6 h3 e5 7 d5 ♘a6 8 ♙g5 ♚e8 9 g4**

In the King's Indian there are many different campaign plots. For example, in the main line White attacks on the queenside and Black attacks on the kingside. The variation White tries in this game attempts to render the usual King's Indian plan of ...f7-f5 with a kingside attack less profitable. The drawback is that White is obligated not to castle kingside.

**9...♙d7**



### 10 ♖d2

With this move White creates the threat of ♜f3, taking advantage of the unprotected knight on f6. Annotating the game afterwards, I gave 10 ♖d2 a dubious mark, on the grounds that 10 ♕d3 was much more natural; but now I think my move perhaps provoked Black to play ...f7-f5, whereas after 10 ♕d3, he might change his plan. In general, playing ...f7-f5 in this position is in White's favor.

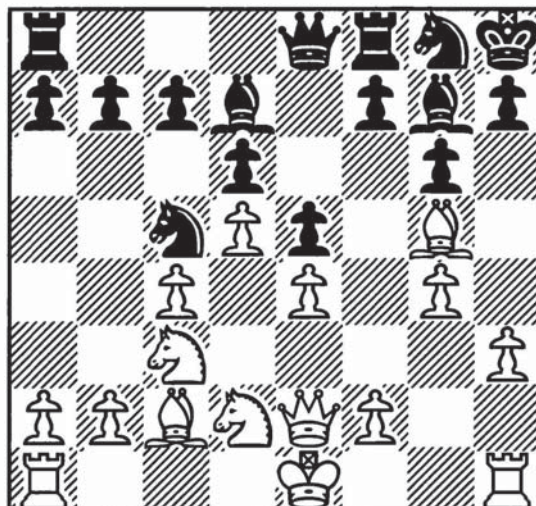
*Joel:* How so?

*Boris:* It will become clear in the game, but to explain briefly: with his pawn on g4 White can open the kingside himself and try to attack the black king.

### 10...♜h8! 11 ♕d3 ♘g8 12 ♜e2 ♘c5

Black prepares the typical kingside ...f7-f5 thrust, but it would have been better to change gears here and try to keep the position closed with either 12...♕h6!? 13 ♕xh6 ♘xh6 14 g5 ♘g8 15 h4 or 12...♘b4! 13 ♕b1 a5. In either case, it would have been more difficult for White to fight for the initiative.

### 13 ♕c2



### 13...f5?!

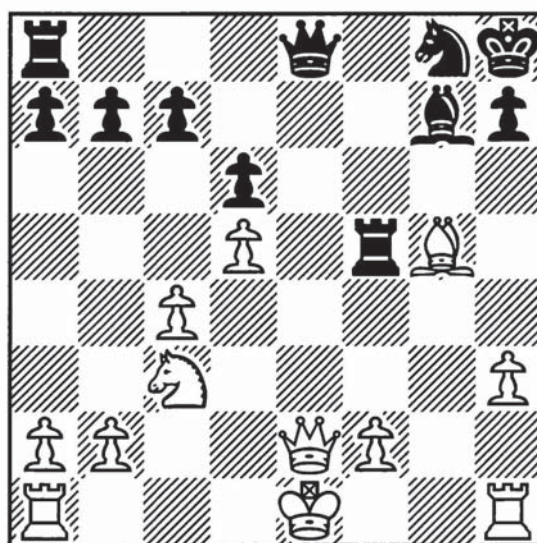
*Joel:* I thought he was going to play 13...a5.

*Boris:* Probably 13...a5, keeping the position closed, was a reasonable alternative. After this, White could castle long and prepare kingside action by bringing the knight to g3 and pushing his h-pawn. In this case, ...f7-f5 would be impossible, so generally this is the last moment for Black to execute his plan.

### 14 gxf5 gxf5 15 exf5 e4!

This pawn sacrifice is necessary if Black doesn't want to receive a passive, prospectless position. For example, after 15...♙xf5 16 ♙xf5 ♖xf5 17 ♘de4, Black has no counterplay and White is without obstacles.

### 16 ♘dxe4 ♘xe4 17 ♙xe4 ♙xf5 18 ♙xf5 ♖xf5



**Exercise:** What should White play? (difficulty level 3)

*Joel:* I'm torn between 19 ♖g1 and 19 ♙d2.

*Boris:* What is White's goal? He has an extra pawn. Should he try to transpose to an endgame, or keep queens on the board and play a middlegame?

*Joel:* I would keep queens on the board and play 19 ♘e4. I don't think the extra pawn is worth much on the open f-file.

*Boris:* Strategically you are right to keep the queens on. In the endgame, Black's active pieces would be enough compensation for the pawn.

Tactically though, 19 ♘e4 is not good because the bishop on g5 is under-protected, and 19...♚e5 gives Black a great position.

*Joel:* So 19 ♙e3 - ?

*Boris:* Correct.

*Joel:* My feeling was that I wanted to keep queens on the board and play for the initiative. I didn't think retreating the bishop was in line with that idea.

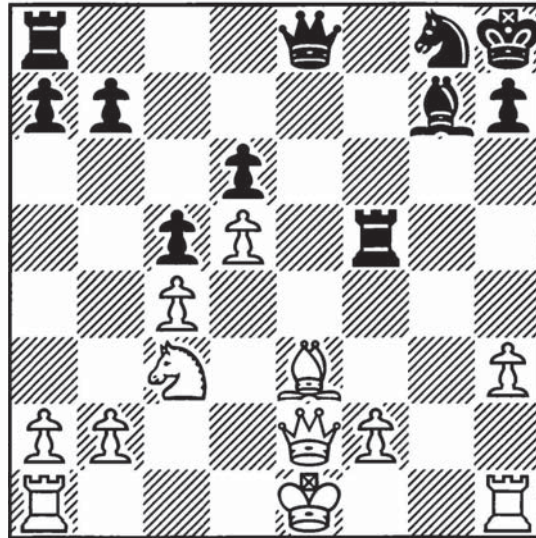


**Boris:** It seems as if you didn't understand that the bishop was misplaced on g5, having already fulfilled its duty there. 19 ♖e3 both prevents the exchange of queens and improves the position of the bishop. Naturally White is not afraid of ...♙xc3+, because Black's king would be in serious trouble after ♙d4.

**19 ♖e3!**

Black's possibilities in the endgame are nicely illustrated by the variation 19 ♜xe8? ♜xe8+ 20 ♖e3 ♜f4!, when his position is already preferable.

**19...c5**



**Exercise:** What should White play now? (difficulty level 4)

**Joel:** Connect his rooks and get out of the pin by playing 20 ♖d2.

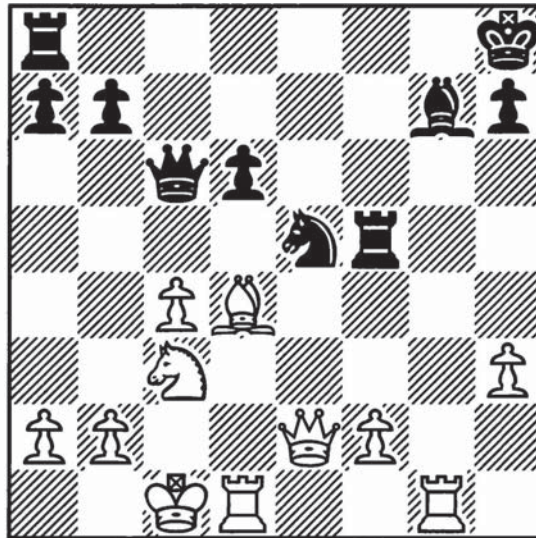
**Boris:** In that case Black can take on c3 and play ...b7-b5, opening up the position of White's king. Note that the pawn on c5 deprives the white bishop of the d4-square to attack the black king. Similarly, if White played 20 ♜g1?, then 20...♙xc3+ 21 bxc3 ♜e5 gives Black a good game. The strategic idea of ...c7-c5 works very well in these variations, so I had to capture en passant.

**20 dxc6! ♜xc6**

It's natural for Black to play moves that gain a tempo, but more dynamic opportunities would have presented themselves after 20...bxc6!?, intending to open up the position by offering yet another pawn with ...d6-d5.

**21 ♜g1 ♘e7 22 0-0-0 ♘g6 23 ♙d4 ♙xd4**

What would happen in the case of 23...♘e5 - ?



**Exercise:** Find a combination. (difficulty level 2)

*Joel:* I want to play 24 ♖xg7 ♘xg7 25 ♚g4+, but after 25...♙f6, I can't decide between 26 ♜d5+ or 26 ♜e4+.

*Boris:* Try to calculate one variation first.

*Joel:* Right, so let's look at 26 ♜e4+ ♙e6. Now my queen is hanging.

*Boris:* You can take care of that straightforwardly.

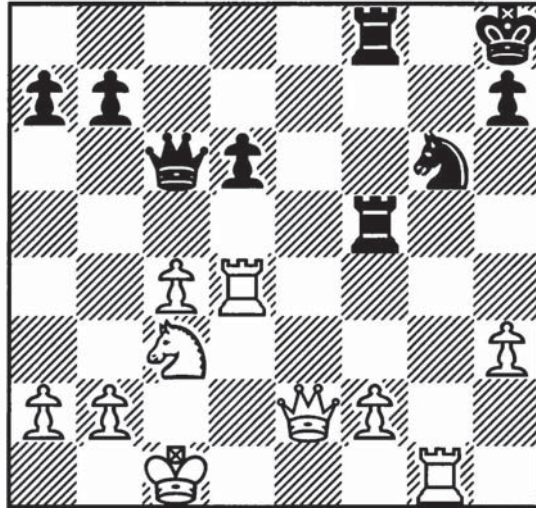
*Joel:* Okay, so 27 ♙xe5, when Black has two ways to recapture.

*Boris:* Calculate one variation first and then check the other.

*Joel:* Well, after 27...♙xe5, White has 28 ♖d5+ ♙e6 29 ♚xf5+ winning, or if 27...dxe5 then 28 ♖d6+ wins.

*Boris:* Correct! Now you have found a decisive combination, you don't need to check your other idea of playing 26 ♜d5+, which wins as well by the way.

**24 ♖xd4 ♖af8**



**Exercise:** The f2-pawn is hanging. Must White go on the defensive or does he have a way to continue fighting for the initiative? (difficulty level 3)

**Joel:** One possibility is 25 ♖e4, but that doesn't feel right. Instead, I'm looking at the knight on g6 and wondering whether there is a way to threaten a sacrifice on g6 so that ...♙xf2 is impossible. My candidate moves are 25 ♛e6 (but Black can just play 25 ...♙5f6) or 25 ♛d3 (but then Black can play 25 ...♙f3). I know the answer has to be that White should fight for the initiative, but I'm not finding anything good.

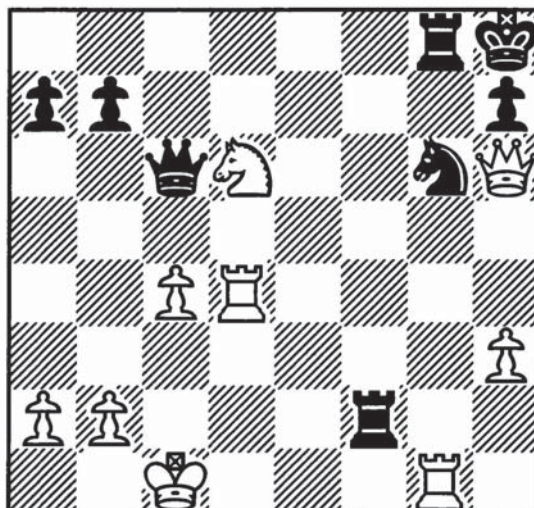
**Boris:** You are close. The queen is underworked and needs to get involved in the attack. The correct move is 25 ♛e3.

**25 ♛e3! ♙f3**

Black loses after 25...♙xf2 26 ♙xg6! ♙f1+ (or 26...hxg6? 27 ♛h6+ and mates) 27 ♖d1.

**26 ♛h6! ♙g8 27 ♖e4 ♛c7**

27...♙f7 28 ♖xd6 ♙xf2 is worse:





**Exercise:** Find a combination. (difficulty level 4)

Joel: I don't see anything.

Boris: You see that the king is suffocated so a check would be mate.

Joel: I know, I was looking at 29 ♖f7, but it doesn't work.

Boris: Which piece can give mate?

Joel: The knight.

Boris: But the rook controls f7. Do you see any ideas to realize the idea of ♖f7 mate?

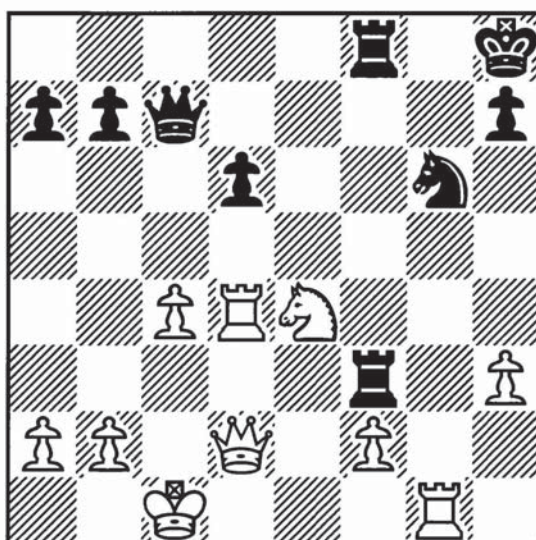
Joel: 29 ♖f4 looks interesting. 29... ♖xf4 allows 30 ♖f7 mate, and if 29... ♖xf4 then 30 ♖xf4 threatens ♖f6+ and mates.

Boris: Let's continue the second line a bit. What if Black plays 30... ♖f8 - ?

Joel: Just take the rook! 31 ♖xf8+ ♖xf8 32 ♖f7 mate.

Boris: Yes, very good, you solved it.

**28 ♖d2 ♖gf8**



**Exercise:** Find a plan for White. (difficulty level 3)

Joel: I like 29 h4.

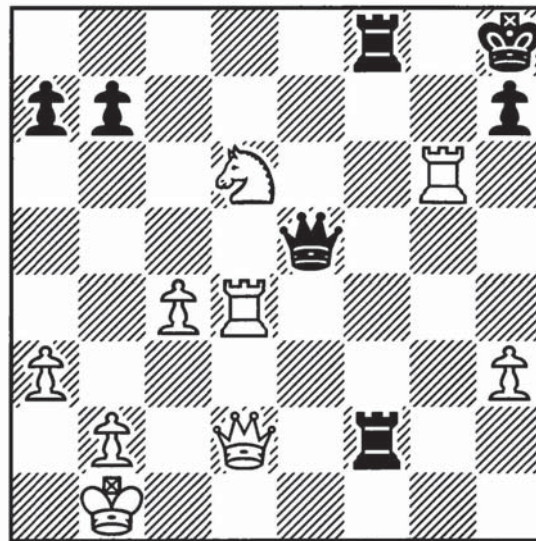
Boris: White has stabilized his position, but Black's game still has some dynamism (he threatens ...d6-d5, for example). So after your 29 h4, Black has 29...d5 and the position becomes messy. Here it is most important to prevent Black's counterplay, which means playing 29 ♖b1 followed by a2-a3, when White's position is winning because Black's counterplay evaporates.

**29 ♖b1! ♖e7 30 a3! ♖f4 31 ♖g4 ♖e5 32 ♖xd6 ♖f8**

Note that Black didn't have 32... ♖xf2 because 33 ♖dx4 wins.

**33 ♖ge4?!**

Having consolidated, White stopped being so vigilant and missed a winning combination: 33 ♖xg6! hxg6 34 ♜h6+ ♔g8 35 ♜xg6+ ♜g7 36 ♜e6+ etc. What if Black tries 33...♖xf2 instead?

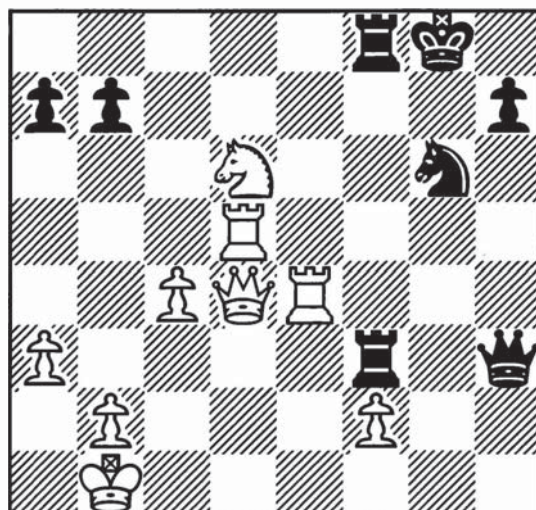


**Exercise:** Find a combination (difficulty level 2)

*Joel:* I would play 34 ♜xf2 ♖xf2 35 ♘f7+ ♖xf7 36 ♖d8+ and mates.

*Boris:* Very good!

33...♜h5 34 ♖d5 ♜xh3 35 ♜d4+ ♔g8



This diagram demonstrates the triumph of centralization. Despite material being almost equal, White has a decisive advantage.

**Exercise:** How to develop the attack? (difficulty level 2)

### Lessons with a Grandmaster 3

*Joel:* The only thing I'm seeing is 36 ♖g5.

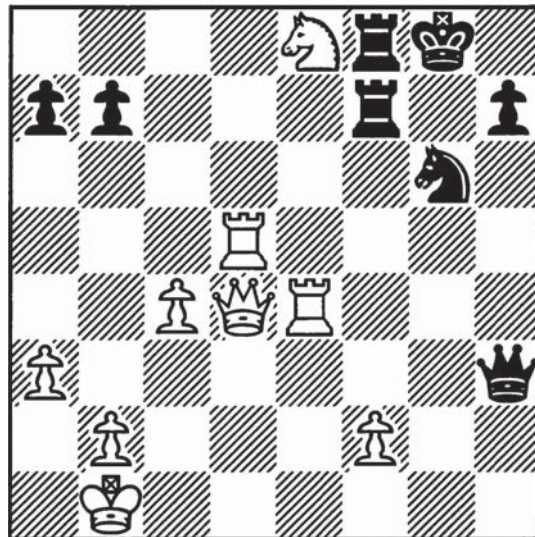
*Boris:* That doesn't threaten anything. After 36...♞d3, White loses centralization and also the knight on d6. Try to find a move that creates a threat.

*Joel:* What about 36 ♜e8 - ?

*Boris:* Correct.

**36 ♜e8! ♞3f7**

36...♞8f7 would lose immediately to 37 ♞d8.



**Exercise:** Find new resources to maintain the initiative. (difficulty level 2)

*Joel:* I don't see anything.

*Boris:* Let's use logic. All your pieces are ideally placed. When your pieces are ideally placed, what do you do?

*Joel:* Play with pawns.

*Boris:* And so?

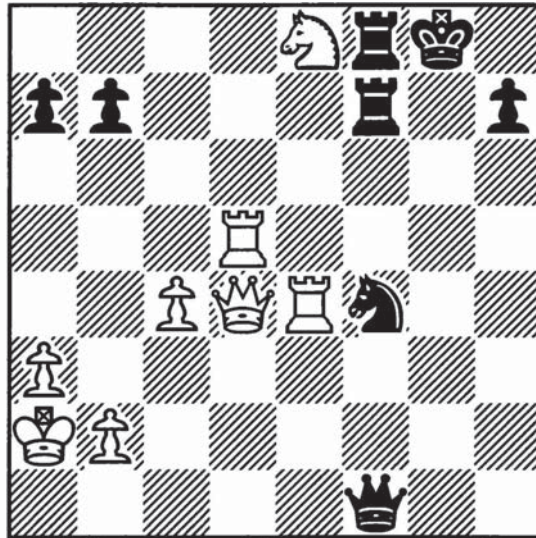
*Joel:* 37 f4.

*Boris:* Correct, though you have to see that Black cannot take the pawn with either rook or knight because of the mate threat on g7.

**37 f4! ♞f1+ 38 ♚a2 ♞g2**

What happens if Black plays 38...♜xf4 here?





**Exercise:** Find an immediate win. (difficulty level 2)

*Joel:* I don't see anything. The only thing is 39 ♖g5+, but I think Black is okay after 39...♘g6.

*Boris:* So you see that the g7-square is weak. Remember Smyslov's tactical elements?

*Joel:* Pins, forks, and checks.

*Boris:* Right. I don't see any forks, and if you check then the knight goes back, but do you see any pins?

*Joel:* 39 ♖f5!.

*Boris:* Right.

**39 f5 ♘e7 40 ♖g4+ 1-0**

The above game demonstrates an important principle: *Maintain the initiative at all cost and try not to cede the initiative to your opponent.* I managed to play precisely and fulfill this task, but White was better out of the opening. The next game will be more complicated.

My opponent, Andrei Sokolov, was a superstar in those years. He won the Soviet Championship in 1984 at the age of 21. In the world championship cycle, he reached the candidate finals for the right to play Kasparov for the crown, but lost to Karpov. After this defeat, he was never quite the same. He lost his self-confidence, which is one of the most important qualities of a good player.

*Joel:* How do you develop self-confidence in chess?

*Boris:* Generally, improving your chess ability in all areas will improve your self-confidence. As Capablanca said, the best way to improve self-confidence in chess is "permanent winning!" I would highly recommend this method.

*Joel:* As we discussed at the end of Volume 2, lack of self-confidence manifests itself

when you believe you made a mistake and begin severely criticizing yourself for it. A prime example is when you need to calculate variations.

*Boris:* And, importantly, when you need to estimate and evaluate resulting positions, which your lack of self-confidence will negatively affect.

*Joel:* Right, exactly. In such situations, a player might start to get down on themselves and begin what we call “negative self-talk”; for example, he might label himself an idiot. Cognitive behavioral therapists call this type of thinking a cognitive distortion. When we already feel bad, such distortions make us feel worse and lead to further depressive thinking and further loss of self-confidence. In other words, it spirals in a downward direction. In the grip of such a spiral, it is almost impossible to spot your opportunities since you are caught up with what you can’t do or see or what you have done wrong. You will also tend to evaluate positions more pessimistically. You will view the glass as half empty instead of half full. Because you will only see your opponent’s threats and not your own, you will not be able to make use of your own trumps.

When you find that you are calling yourself names, I think it is important to take a minute, label that thinking as a distortion, and immediately challenge it by asking yourself whether it’s true that you’re an idiot, and in reply generate several, more rational possibilities. For example, after an inaccuracy, instead of calling yourself names, you might say “I have made an inaccuracy or even a mistake, but that does not make me an idiot. Let’s consider the position, determine what the strengths and weakness are, and try to create difficult problems for my opponent to solve.” This is a much healthier and, objectively, more accurate self-statement than “I’m an idiot”.

*Game 12*  
**B.Gulko-An.Sokolov**  
USSR Championship, Riga 1985  
*Nimzo-Indian Defense*

This game illustrates strategies when the opponents play on opposite sides of the board. In such situations, Black cedes the initiative to White in order to develop his own counter-chances. In such games, the struggle is usually very sharp, the probability of a draw very low, and the price of a move very high. Very often Black opts for this strategy when he wants to play for a win.

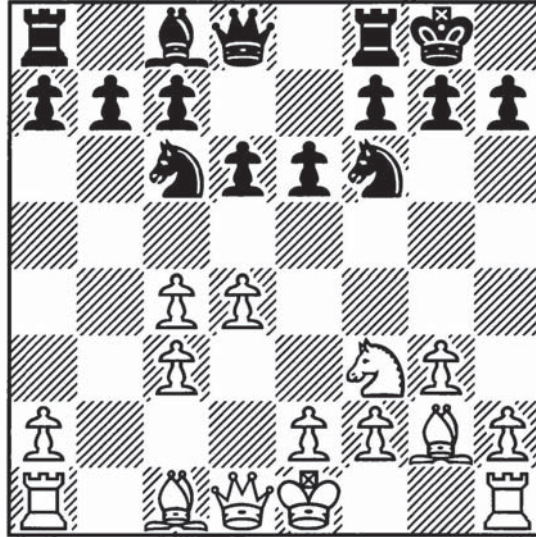
**1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 ♘c3 ♙b4 4 g3**

The variation with an early g2-g3 rules out ...b7-b6, which is a popular response against 4 ♘f3 (followed by 5 g3). The disadvantage is that it permits the plan that my opponent uses in this game. It is interesting that Kasparov, when playing this system, almost always preferred the 4 ♘f3 move order and only played g2-g3 after 4...c5. Apparently, he didn’t like the position we reach in this game or the possibility of transposing to the Catalan after 4...d5.

**4...♙xc3+!? 5 bxc3 0-0 6 ♗g2**

Here White could change his plan and turn the position into a kind of Sämisch Variation by playing 6 ♖c2!? with the idea of e2-e4 and ♙d3. Although the move g2-g3 is then useless, White would have saved a tempo on not playing a2-a3, while the pawn on e2 gets to e4 in one move, so 6 ♖c2 is an interesting alternative.

**6...d6 7 ♘f3 ♘c6**



In Volume 1, we analyzed my game with Yasser Seirawan, in which he put his knight on d7 here and reached a passive position. Sokolov develops his knight more actively on c6 with the idea of ...♙a5, attacking the c4-pawn.

**8 0-0**

This was one of the first games with this variation. Later, a more sophisticated way of playing was found: 8 ♖d3!? e5 9 ♘d2 ♘d7 10 0-0 f5 11 c5! and Black has problems developing his light-squared bishop, C.Ward-B.Gulko, Copenhagen 1996. It shows that automatic castling is not always the best move, and that, many times, it would be better to make other, more useful moves.

**8...♗b8!?**

Black plans to develop the c8-bishop on a6. A different plan is 8...e5!?, bringing it out on f5 or g4.

**9 ♖d3!?**

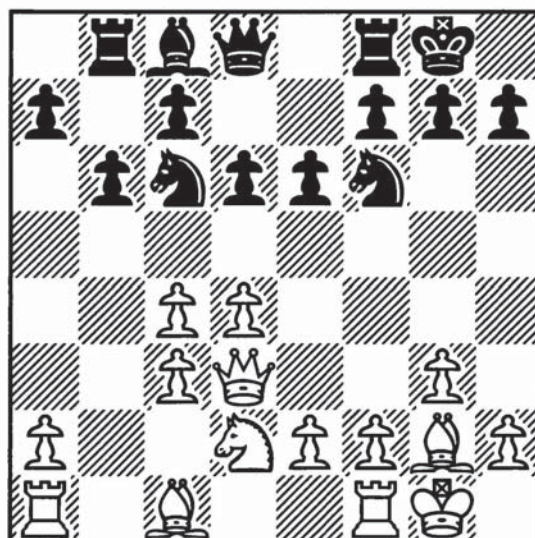
A quieter alternative is 9 c5!? d5 (9...dxc5 10 ♙a3 b6 11 dxc5 b5 12 ♘d4 leaves White with a positional advantage) 10 ♙e5!? ♙xe5 11 dxe5 ♘d7 12 ♖d4 and White has the more pleasant position.

*Joel:* Why? Because he has more space and the two bishops?

*Boris:* Yes, whereas it is not so easy for Black to activate his pieces.

**9...b6 10 ♘d2**





### 10...Qb7

Black changes his plan. He could have continued 10...Qa5!? 11 Qb3 Qa6!, although after 12 Qxa5 bxa5 13 Qc6! Bb6 14 Qb5, Black still has a struggle to equalize. Instead, Sokolov permits White to occupy the center, creating a strategically more complicated position. This approach shows Black to be a self-confident player.

### 11 Qb3

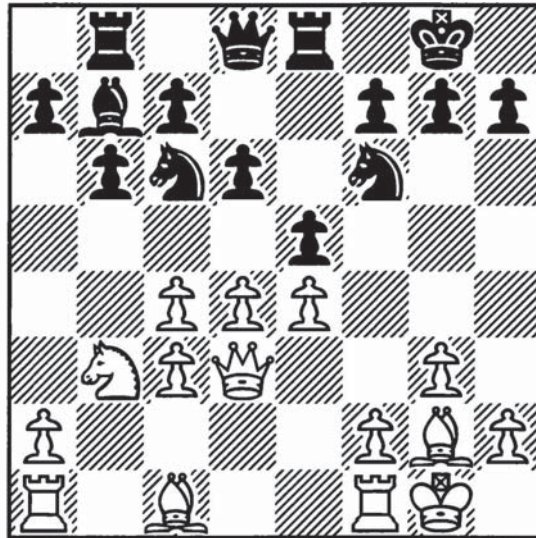
*Joel:* Preventing ...Qa5 - ?

*Boris:* I make it less attractive, but Qb3 doesn't prevent ...Qa5 necessarily. A similar opposition arises after 11 e4 Qa5 12 Qb3, when Black plays 12...Qa6! 13 Qxa5 bxa5 and the game is equal, because the weakness of the c4-pawn compensates for the ugliness of Black's doubled pawns on the a-file.

### 11...Re8

Now in the case of 11...Qa5?! 12 Qxa5 bxa5 13 Qxb7 Bxb7 14 Qg5 h6 15 Qxf6 Bxf6 16 Bxb1, White is better. With the light-squared bishops off the board, the weakness on c4 is not so relevant, whereas Black still has ugly doubled a-pawns.

### 12 e4 e5



**Exercise:** White's next move determines his plan. What would you play? (difficulty level 4)

**Joel:** I remember reading in Ivan Sokolov's *Winning Chess Middlegames* that in such positions it is important to maintain the central tension for as long as possible, until it is advantageous to fix the center. I can't tell whether it is advantageous or not to close the center with d4-d5 here, nor what the repercussions of that would be, so I guess I would play 13 f4 instead.

**Boris:** Ivan Sokolov's advice is generally correct – with the two bishops you're not usually in a rush to close the center – but this position is an exception because Black's pieces are well placed for the opening of the game. For example, if you had played 13 f4?!, Black has 13...exd4 14 cxd4 ♖b4 15 ♔c3 c5 with the advantage, as you would be unable to protect your center.

**Joel:** How can you tell that Black's pieces are well placed for the opening of the game? I mean, let's say you gave Black the move here, would he take on d4, undoubling your pawns and open the position?

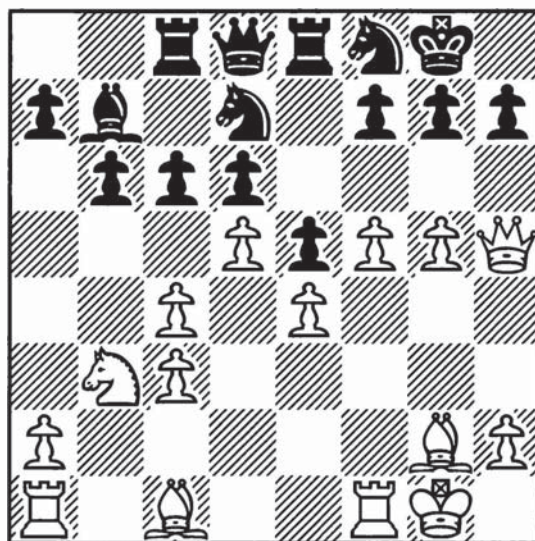
**Boris:** Well, if we let White make a useful developing move, such as 13 ♕d2, Black could play 13...a5 14 a4 exd4 15 cxd4 ♖b4 and we see that his position is again very promising. In order to avoid his opponent's counterplay there, White has to close the center and place his hopes in a kingside attack; but now Black will have counterplay on the c-file against White's doubled pawns. In other words, Black has skillfully created a position in which he has real chances of counterplay on the queenside, while White has to attack on the kingside, so the game becomes very sharp.

**13 d5!? ♜e7**

Here Black might obtain counterplay against White's pawns, at the cost of destroying his own pawn structure, with 13...♜a5 14 ♜xa5 bxa5 15 ♕e3 ♕a6, when it is difficult for White

to prove an advantage. Sokolov, however, tries to create a more complicated struggle.

**14 f4 ♖g6 15 f5 ♖f8 16 ♚e2 c6! 17 g4 ♜c8! 18 g5 ♖6d7 19 ♚h5**



The last few moves by both sides were easily understandable. White builds up on the kingside, while Black tries to use his trumps on the c-file. Now White has to go forward with his attack because the quiet 19 ♖d2? ♖a6 is just good for Black.

**19...cxd5**

Black goes for the c3-pawn. He could win the c4-pawn with 19...♖a6!?, but the position after 20 f6 ♖g6 21 fxg7 ♖xc4 22 ♜f2 cxd5 23 exd5 e4 24 ♖d4 would be extremely unclear.

**20 cxd5 ♜xc3**

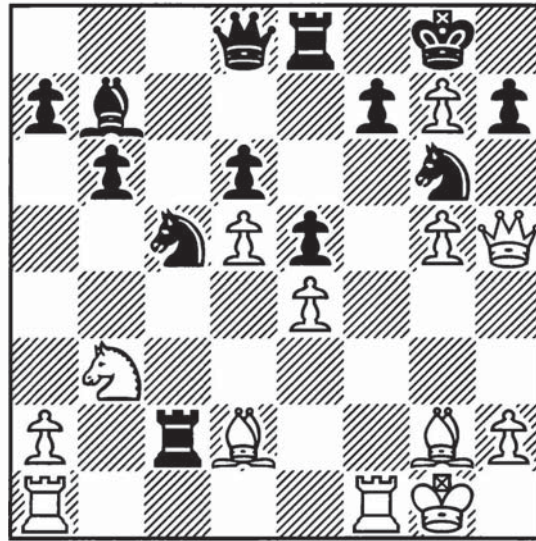
A more cautious approach would have been 20...♖a6 21 ♜f2 f6 with another unclear position. The difficulty for Black is that he has to choose between many different such positions, and these are impossible to evaluate until there is a clear result, since the usual criteria for assessing them are not easy to implement.

**21 ♖d2 ♜c2 22 f6 ♖g6 23 fxg7 ♖c5?!**

The drawback to this move is that it allows White to exchange his b3-knight which does not and cannot participate in the attack. Similarly, Black should not consider 23...♜xd2?! because it improves the position of White's pieces; e.g. 24 ♖xd2 ♖f4 25 ♚h6 ♖a6 26 ♜f3 with the lethal threat of ♖h3-f5.

Black's best continuation was 23...♖a6! 24 ♜f2 (after 24 ♜f3 ♖e2 25 ♜af1 ♖xf3 26 ♜xf3 ♖xg7 27 ♜xf7+ ♖xf7 28 ♚xh7+ ♖f8 29 ♚h6+, White only has a perpetual) 24...♖f4!? (24...♜xd2!? 25 ♖xd2 ♖c5 26 ♚h6 ♖d3 27 ♜f3 ♚c8 28 ♖f1 leads to a messy position that is difficult to evaluate) 25 ♖xf4!? (or 25 ♚h6!? ♖c5 26 ♜f3 ♖xe4 27 ♖xf4 exf4 28 ♖d4 ♜xg2+ 29 ♖xg2 ♚xg5+ 30 ♚xg5 ♖xg5 31 ♜xf4 ♖c4 and chances are approximately equal) 25...♜xf2 26 ♖xf2 exf4 27 ♖h3 ♖e5 28 ♖f5 ♖g6 29 ♖d4 b5! with yet another unclear position.





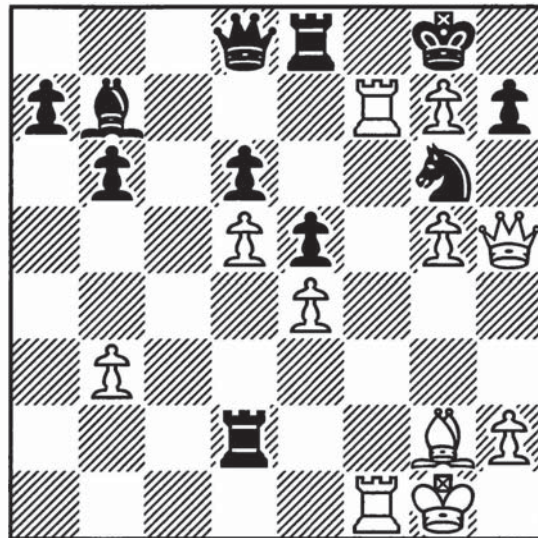
**Exercise:** Find the best way for White. (difficulty level 5)

*Joel:* I looked at this for a while and finally decided on 24 ♖xf7. It looks like the rook is immune to capture because, after 24...♙xf7 25 ♜xh7 ♜g8 26 g8♜ mate. Instead, Black has the in-between move 24...♘xb3. I planned 25 axb3 ♜xd2 26 ♜1xa7 and it looks like Black is in serious trouble. If, for example, 26...♜d1+ then 27 ♙f1 and Black cannot play 27...♙a6 because of 28 ♜f8+ and Black gets mated no matter how he takes.

*Boris:* Your suggestion of 24 ♖xf7!? is interesting but not sufficient to win. Let's consider a few possibilities:

a) 24...♙xf7 (accepting the rook is obviously incorrect) 25 ♜xh7 ♜g8 26 ♜f1+ ♙e7 27 ♘xc5, followed by ♜xg6 and the e6-square is undefended.

b) 24...♘xb3 25 axb3 ♜xd2 26 ♜af1! (not 26 ♜xb7? ♜xg2+, followed by a fork on f4; and the move you offered, 26 ♜xa7, is a mistake because, after 26...♜e7, White's attack is out of steam) and now:

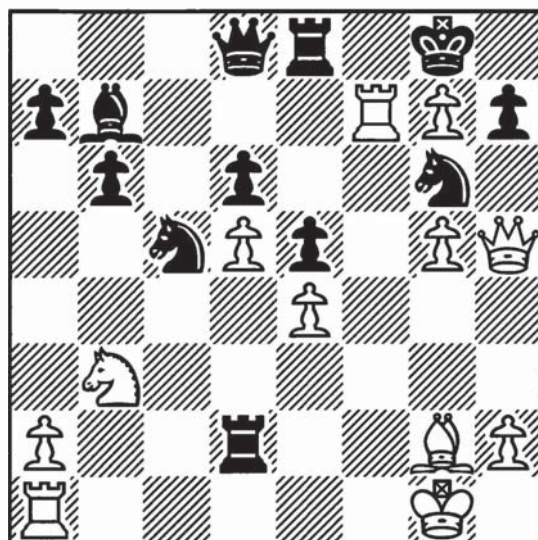


b1) 26...♙c8 27 ♖f8+! ♜xf8 28 gxf8♙+ ♘xf8 29 ♚f7+ ♔h8 30 ♚xf8+ and White will emerge a piece up.

b2) 26...♚c8 27 ♖f8+ (not 27 ♙h3? because of 27...♚c5+ 28 ♔h1 ♙xd5 and Black escapes) 27...♜xf8 28 gxf8♙+ ♘xf8 29 ♚f7+ ♔h8 30 ♙h3! ♚d8 31 ♚xf8+ ♚xf8 32 ♜xf8+ ♔g7 33 ♜f6 with a winning endgame.

b3) 26...♙a6 (the most interesting line) 27 ♙h3! ♙xf1 28 ♙e6 ♜xe6 29 dxe6, followed by the inevitable ♖f8+ and wins.

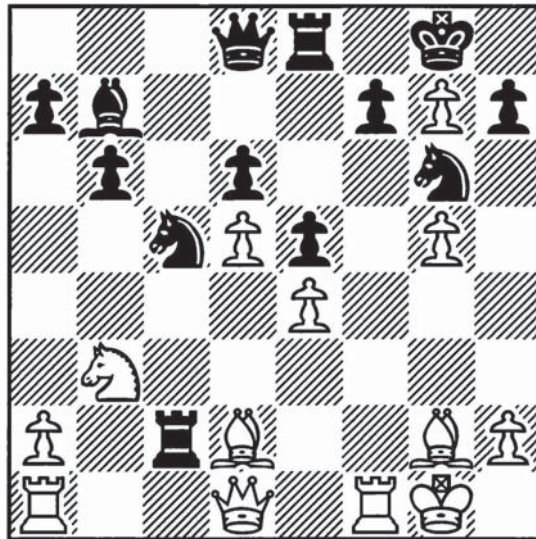
The only defense is 24...♜xd2!.



Then if 25 ♘xc5!? bxc5 26 ♜af1 ♙a6, White has 27 ♙h3! ♙xf1 28 ♙e6 ♜xe6 29 dxe6 ♙c4! 30 e7! (30 ♖f8+ doesn't work here) 30...♘xe7 31 ♖f8+ ♚xf8 32 gxf8♙+ ♔xf8 33 g6!, threatening ♚h6+ and wins.

Therefore the correct defense is 25...dxc5! (opening the d-file and ruling out ♙h3, which is available after 25...bxc5, as we have just seen) 26 ♜af1 ♙a6 27 ♖f8+ (not now 27 ♙h3??

♙xf1 28 ♙e6 ♖xe6 29 dxe6 ♜d4+ and Black mates) 27...♖xf8 28 gxf8♜+ ♜xf8 29 ♜f7+ ♜h8 30 ♜xf8+ ♜xf8 31 ♖xf8+ ♜g7 32 ♖a8 leads to an approximately equal ending.  
**24 ♜d1!!**



**Exercise:** White tries to eliminate his opponent's counterplay. What does Black have to do? (difficulty level 5)

*Joel:* I would play 24...♖xd2 followed by ...♜f4 and ...♜xg5.

*Boris:* After 24...♖xd2 25 ♜xd2 ♜f4, White simply plays 26 ♖xf4 with a strong position.

**24...♖c4?!**

This is the decisive moment of the game. The correct move was 24...♖b2, maintaining the rook on the second rank, albeit in a more vulnerable position. Black's reaction is typical: *We prefer inferior moves that we can calculate to superior moves where the consequences are hard to understand.* The rook looks vulnerable on b2, but White cannot capture it (e.g. 25 ♙c1? ♖xg2+! 26 ♜xg2 ♜xe4 with a big advantage for Black). So, either after an exchange on c5 or immediately, White plays ♖f6 with a tense position that is difficult to evaluate.

**25 ♜xc5!**

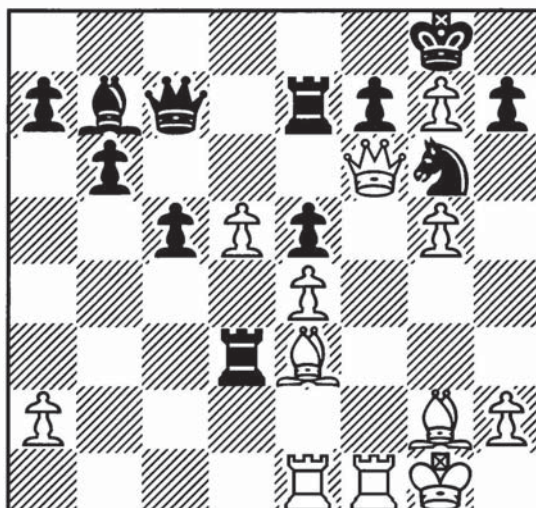
The cheap shot 25 ♖xf7? would pass the advantage to Black after 25...♜xf7 26 ♜f1+ ♜f4.

**25...dxc5?!**

Here 25...♖xc5! was better; White has a strong initiative after 26 ♖f6, but Black can defend. Although Black's rook looks active on c4, it is not actually coordinated with the rest of his army. It stands like a ghost on the board.

**26 ♜f3 ♖e7 27 ♜f6 ♖d4 28 ♙e3 ♖d3 29 ♖ae1 ♜c7**





**Exercise:** Find the strongest continuation. (difficulty level 3)

*Joel:* Despite your previous description of Black's rook as ghost-like, I am drawn to 30 ♖d1, beginning to make the passed d-pawn felt.

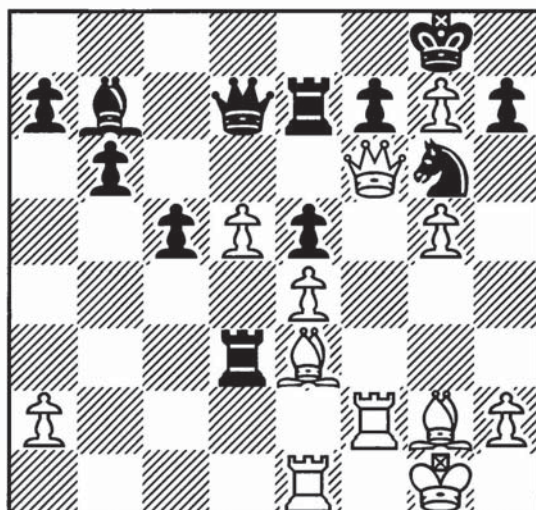
*Boris:* That's an interesting move which I didn't consider. I wanted to use both my rooks for assault and didn't want to exchange off Black's useless one. After 30...♙xd1 31 ♖xd1 ♙d7, Black can defend.

**30 ♗f2!**

Threatening 31 ♕f1. The more direct 30 ♗f3 is inferior in view of 30...♙c8 31 ♕f1 ♗xe3 32 ♗xe3 ♙d7 and it's not so easy for White to coordinate his awkward rooks.

In the case of 30 ♗f2, the exchange sacrifice doesn't give Black sufficient compensation because, after 30...♙c8 31 ♕f1 ♗xe3 32 ♗xe3 ♙d7 33 ♗ef3, White's pieces are excellently coordinated.

**30...♙d7**



**Exercise:** Find the strongest continuation for White. (difficulty level 3)

**Joel:** I like the idea of playing ♔h3 but I can't do it straight away, so perhaps 31 ♖f3 threatening 32 ♔h3 - ? I know you just said that if White plays ♖f3 instead of ♖f2, then Black would sacrifice the exchange on e3 and White's rooks would not coordinate well, but I can't see why. It seems like 32 ♔h3 is a very strong threat.

**Boris:** Your answer is correct. In the previous variation, Black's queen was on c7, which meant that he could answer 30 ♖f3 with 30...♔c8, preventing ♔h3. Here, the queen is on d7, so Black doesn't have this resource.

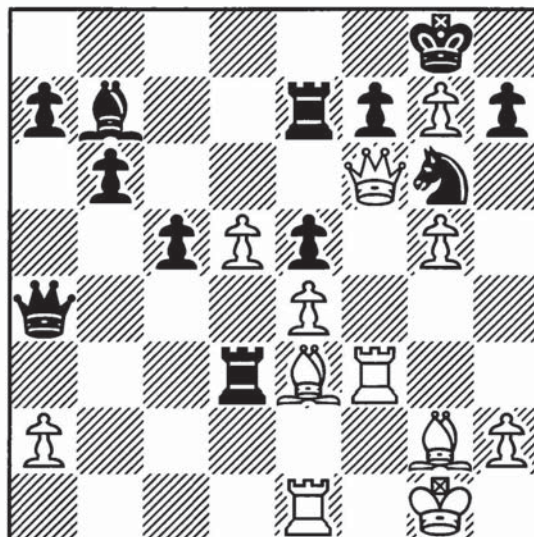
Secondly, in the previous variation, White would then play ♔f1 attacking Black's rook so after the exchange sacrifice on e3, the f1-square would not be available for White's rook. Here, the threat is 32 ♔h3 followed by ♔e6. Here the exchange sacrifice would not work because White would have the f1-square available for his e1-rook and they would be well coordinated.

The difficulty in finding this move is that I just played 20 ♖f2, but *we shouldn't be afraid of moving the same piece twice in a row*. Black's 30...♔d7 made 31 ♖f3 very strong.

Nevertheless, in playing 31 ♖f3, you had to see that 31...♘h4 wouldn't help Black because of 32 ♖h3 (32 ♖g3 is also good) and if 32...♘xg2 then 33 ♖xh7! with mate in two, or 32...♔g4 33 ♖xh4 ♔xh4 34 ♔f2 and Black loses the e7-rook, while after 32...♘g6 33 ♖h6, Black is defenseless against h2-h4-h5 or ♔h3.

**31 ♖f3! ♔a4**

Black rushes to support the efforts of his lone rook on d3.



**Exercise:** Find the correct continuation for White's attack. (difficulty level 4)

**Joel:** All my pieces are well placed, so maybe 32 d6, trying to break through?

**Boris:** And after 32...♖d7 - ?

**Joel:** I was thinking about 33 ♖h3, but now I see that Black can take on d6 with his rook on d3, attacking the queen and continuing to protect f7.

**Boris:** That is a strong response but 33...♙xe4 is perhaps even stronger. You're right though: *When your pieces occupy their best squares, you need to look for a pawn breakthrough.* The problem here is that you didn't move the right pawn.

**Joel:** 32 h4 - ?

**Boris:** Correct!

**32 h4!**

White doesn't have time for 32 ♖h3? due to 32...♙xe4 33 ♖e6 ♖xd5! and Black is winning, because he protects the f7-square through the bishop on e6.

**32...♖d7**

Black could still try to counterattack with 32...♙xe4 33 h5 ♖xd5, but it doesn't work: 34 ♖f2! ♙b4 35 hxg6 ♙xe1+ 36 ♖h2 hxg6 37 ♙xe7 ♖xg7 38 ♖xd5 and f7 falls with mate.

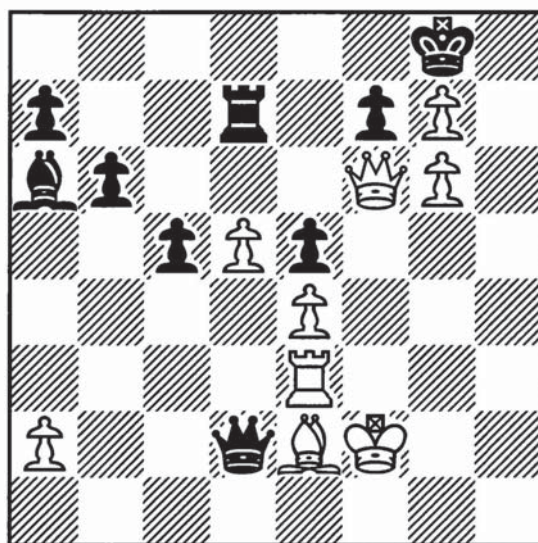
**33 h5 ♖h4 34 g6!**

After this exchange sacrifice, Black is defenseless.

**34...♖xf3+ 35 ♖xf3 hxg6 36 hxg6 ♖xe3**

36...♙b4 loses to 37 ♖f1! ♖xe3 38 ♙h4 ♖xg7 39 ♙h7+ ♖f8 40 d6! and mate is inevitable.

**37 ♖xe3 ♙d4 38 ♖f2 ♙d2+ 39 ♖e2 ♖a6**



**Exercise:** Find the decisive continuation. (difficulty level 3)

**Joel:** I like 40 ♙h4, intending 40...♖xg7 (or 40...fxg6 41 ♙h8+ ♖f7 42 ♙f8 mate) 41 ♙h7+ ♖f6 42 g7. I'm not finding a mate with rook and queen checks, but it looks like I can promote my g-pawn to a knight and mate will surely follow.

**Boris:** That's exactly the solution. Very good!

**40 ♙h4 ♖xg7 41 ♙h7+ 1-0**



My opponent resigned in view of the following beautiful mate: 41...♔f6 42 g7 ♕xe2 43 g8N+! ♕g5 44 ♖h6+ ♕g4 45 ♘f6 mate.

Game 13  
I.V.Ivanov-B.Gulko  
Philadelphia 1988  
Old Indian Defense

1 ♘f3 ♘f6 2 c4 d6 3 d4 ♘bd7 4 ♘c3 c6!?

This is a prophylactic move against the development of White's bishop on g5. It is difficult to develop counterplay after the immediate 4...e5 because of 5 ♕g5 ♕e7 6 e3, as played in my game against Kochyev, which we analyzed in Volume 2 (Game 2). So it makes sense to wait until White plays e2-e4 before playing ...e7-e5, so that Black can build his counterplay against the e4-pawn.

*Joel:* It's interesting because I once had a conversation with GM Varuzhan Akobian about what to play as White against the KID and he said the entire defense is based upon counterattacking against e4, so it makes sense to explore lines where White puts the pawn on e3 instead, such as the Smyslov Variation (1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 ♕g7 4 ♕g5).

*Boris:* That's an interesting consideration. The Smyslov Variation is certainly playable, if not so aggressive. I've also played the Sämisch Variation, in which the e4-pawn is supported by its neighbor on f3 and is therefore safer. If White keeps the e-file closed with d4-d5, Black's main idea is to counterattack the e4-square with ...f7-f5.

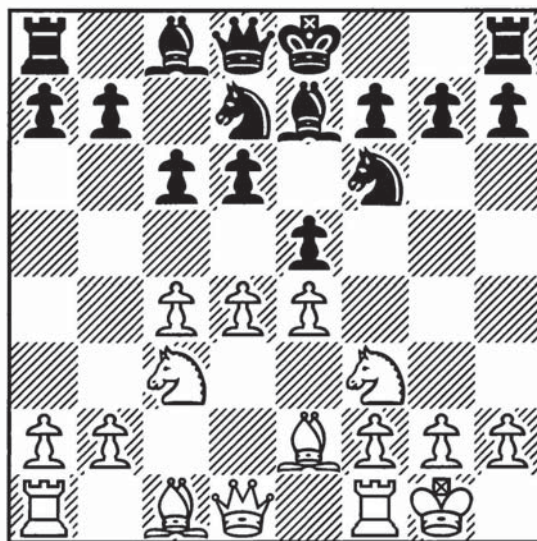
**5 e4**

Here 5 ♕g5 doesn't promise anything because of 5...h6 6 ♕h4 g5 7 ♕g3 ♘h5 with a good game for Black.

*Joel:* When is it good and when is it not good to chase White's dark-squared bishop in this type of pawn structure?

*Boris:* It is good in practically all cases because White's pawns are fixed on c4 and e4, so the dark squares in White's camp can become weak. As a result, White's dark-squared bishop becomes very valuable.

**5...e5 6 ♕e2 ♕e7 7 0-0**



### 7...a6!

At that time, this Old Indian system was quite popular, but it was found that after the normal 7...O-O 8 ♖e3 a6 9 d5 cxd5 10 cxd5 b5 11 ♘d2, the e4-pawn is well protected and White is ready to play against Black's weaknesses on the queenside.

*Joel:* Can you explain those weaknesses? Black's position seems reasonable to me.

*Boris:* White will play b2-b4 and a2-a4, when Black's pawns will become objects of attack. Furthermore, White's bishops are placed very conveniently for a queenside assault. So by delaying ...O-O and playing 7...a6, Black prevents White from building this type of position. In other words, 7...a6 is prophylaxis against White's dangerous plan.

*Joel:* Could White have played something like ♖e3 instead of O-O with the hope of achieving this position?

*Boris:* Maxim Dlugy posed just such a question to me in our US Championship game in 1988, but after 7 ♖e3 ♘g4 8 ♖d2 exd4 9 ♘xd4 ♙b6! 10 ♖xg4 ♙xd4 11 ♖e2 ♘e5 12 ♖e3 the position equalized and we agreed on the draw.

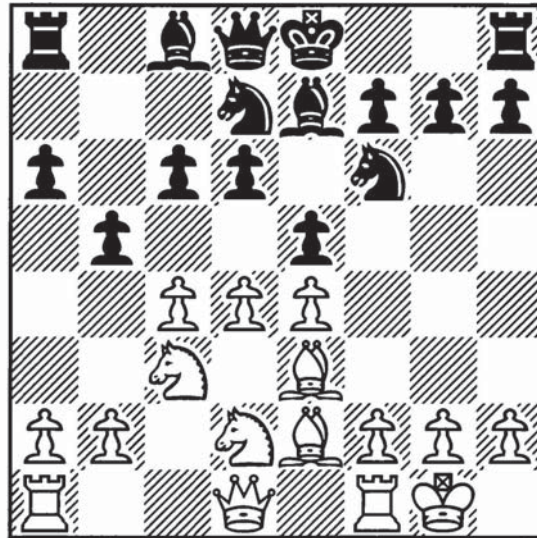
### 8 ♖e3

Igor hopes to build the position we just discussed, which is considered to be the refutation of Black's play. White does, however, have other ideas including 8 a4, preventing ...b7-b5, or 8 ♖b1 b5 9 b4, which today is considered the strongest.

### 8...b5 9 ♘d2

White doesn't have time to play 9 d5 because, after 9...cxd5 10 cxd5 b4, his e-pawn is underprotected. Instead, Ivanov hopes to transpose to a favorable line with 9...O-O? 10 d5, which we discussed in the note to 7...a6 above; however, Black has superior options.

It was better to play 9 a3, and after 9...♖b7 10 ♙c2 O-O 11 h3 ♙b8 12 ♗fd1, White's position is preferable, B.Gulko-D.Barlov, Saint John 1998.



**Exercise:** What should Black play? (difficulty level 4)

*Joel:* I like 9...Nxe4.

*Boris:* And after 10 Ndx4 - ?

*Joel:* 10...f5, winning the piece back.

*Boris:* But White can play 11 dxe5 and it seems Black is losing. This is a strategic position and, in general, Black is not ready for such operations. He has not completed development, so these types of combinations don't usually work.

*Joel:* It's unwise to open the center with a combination when you haven't finished your development.

*Boris:* Right, you can only do that if you are fully mobilized.

**9...exd4!?**

It would be a mistake for Black to castle here because, after 10 d5, White has reached his dream position that we have been talking about. Avoiding this allows Black to change the character of the position in his favor.

**10 Qxd4 b4! 11 Na4 c5**

Black is not afraid of weakening the d5-square since the white knight cannot reach it, having been pushed to a4.

**12 Qe3 0-0**

More precise than 12...Qb7?! 13 f3!, when the bishop will be restricted.

**13 f4**

The most aggressive move, but 13 Wc2! was more prudent because it mobilizes his forces and doesn't give Black a target of attack on e4.

**13...Qb7 14 Qf3 Wc2 15 Wc2 Qfe8 16 Qae1 Qf8 17 Qf2**

Here 17 g4!? Nb8!? 18 g5 Nfd7 was an interesting and more aggressive alternative.

*Joel:* That seems very risky. The center isn't closed and White's king is exposed.



**Boris:** Exposed to what? White has gained space and has pushed the enemy pieces back, far away from the center. The position becomes more dynamic, and Black doesn't have a direct way to exploit the exposure of White's king. As they say in Russian, *it is impossible to make an omelet without breaking eggs!*

**17...g6 18 ♖h4! ♜ac8!?**

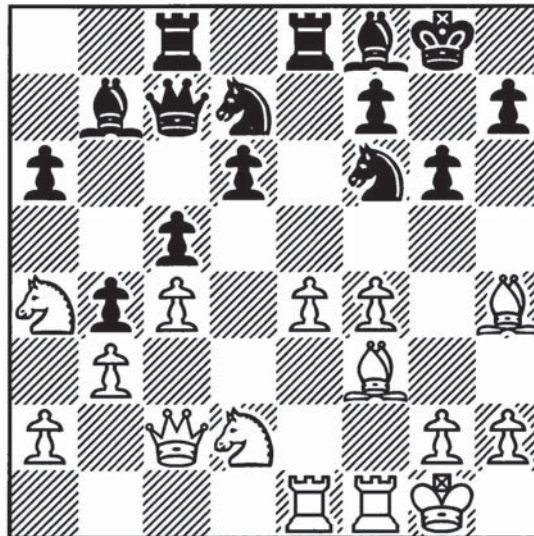
**Joel:** That doesn't make any sense. You put your rook on the c-file, which is blocked. Something like 18...♗g7 seems more normal.

**Boris:** Black's move is prophylactic. White's hopes are connected with the breakthrough e4-e5; in preparation for this, Black overprotects the c5-pawn. You're right, it was possible to play 18...♗g7!?, as after 19 e5? dxe5 20 fxe5 ♘xe5 21 ♜xe5!? (not yet 21 ♖xb7? due to 21...♘eg4!) 21...♜xe5 22 ♖xf6 (still not 22 ♖xb7? due to 22...♝xb7 23 ♖xf6 ♞e2 and Black is winning) 22...♖xf6 23 ♖xb7, Black can refute the combination with 23...♞h5! 24 ♜xf6 ♞xh2+.

However, Black's prophylaxis wasn't necessary. A good decision would have been 18...♖h6! 19 ♖g5 ♗g7, when 20 e5? doesn't work for the same reason as in the 18...♗g7 line. From Black's point of view, it makes strategic sense to attract the white bishop to g5. His plan is to transfer the knight to e6 via f8, and in this case the bishop on g5 would be attacked.

**19 b3**

Preparing for the complications with 19 h3!? had drawbacks too after 19...♖h6! 20 ♖g5 ♗g7 21 e5? dxe5 22 fxe5 ♖xf3 23 exf6 ♜xe1 24 ♜xe1 ♖c6 25 fxg7 ♝g3 with advantage to Black.



**Exercise:** How to regroup Black's pieces? (difficulty level 4)

**Joel:** I'd play 19...♗g7. It seems very natural.

**Boris:** Black has to consider whether to play ...♗g7 immediately or attract White's bish-

bishop to g5 first. In the latter case, White has to contend with the strong positional threat of ...♘f8-e6, eyeing the d4-square and hitting the bishop. Also, his plan of e4-e5 on move 21 doesn't work with the bishop on g5, as is demonstrated in the game. As a result, I chose 19...♗h6. Note as well that after 19...♗g7 20 ♖g3!, Black doesn't have 20...♘f8 because of 21 e5! with a big advantage for White.

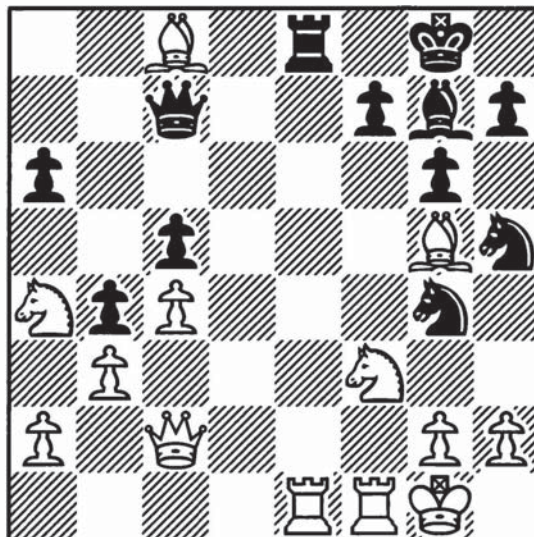
**19...♗h6! 20 ♖g5 ♗g7 21 e5?**

The complications after this move are in Black's favor, but the quiet 21 ♘b2 ♘f8 is also promising for Black because of the position of White's dark-squared bishop (after ...♘e6 White will have to give up his bishop, which was a consequence of my move 19...♗h6). So Black's prophylactic play enabled him to profit from White's activity.

The best way for White was to play prophylactically himself with 21 ♖h4 (proving that 19...♗h6 was positionally very strong), when 21...♘f8 permits 22 e5 with mutual chances.

**21...dxe5 22 fxe5 ♘xe5 23 ♖xe5**

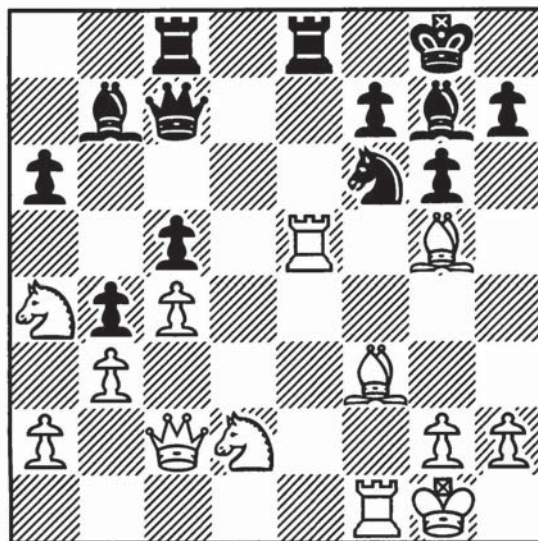
Changing the move order doesn't solve White's problems: 23 ♖xb7 is met by 23...♘eg4! 24 ♘f3 ♘h5!? and if 25 ♖xc8, then:



**Exercise:** How does Black win? (difficulty level 2)

**Joel:** I would play 25...♗d4+ 26 ♖h1 ♗xh2+ 27 ♘xh2 ♘g3 mate.

**Boris:** Very good! A beautiful mate.



**Exercise:** What should Black play here? (difficulty level 3)

*Joel:* I would opt for 23...♔xe5, because 23...♖xe5 24 ♕xf6 ♕xf3 25 ♕xe5 ♔xe5 26 ♘xf3 attacks the queen. If 23...♕xf3 instead, then White can take on e8 and then play 25 ♘xf3.

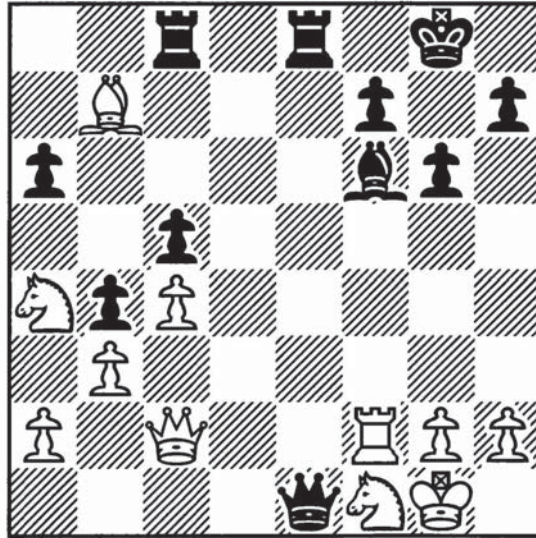
*Boris:* 23...♔xe5 is what was played in the game, but the position after 23...♖xe5 24 ♕xf6 ♕xf6 (not 24...♕xf3? as you suggested) 25 ♕xb7 ♔xb7 26 ♖xf6 is unclear, which we have already discussed. The question then becomes whether 23...♔xe5 is better than 23...♖xe5.

**23...♔xe5! 24 ♕xf6 ♔e3+! 25 ♖f2**

Moving the king was no better: 25 ♔h1 ♕xf3 26 ♖xf3 (26 ♕xg7 loses immediately to 26...♔e2! 27 gxf3 ♖cd8 28 ♖d1 ♔f2!, followed by ...♖e2) 26...♔e2! 27 ♕g5 (the only try; after either 27 ♔c1 ♕h6 or 27 ♕xg7 ♖cd8 28 ♕h6 ♖xd2, Black wins easily) 27...♖cd8! 28 h4 f6 29 ♕f4 ♔e1+ 30 ♔h2 (both 30 ♖f1 ♖xd2 and 30 ♘f1 ♖e2 31 ♔c1 ♖d1 are equally fatal) 30...♖e2 and White is defenseless.

**25...♕xf6 26 ♘f1 ♔e1 27 ♕xb7**



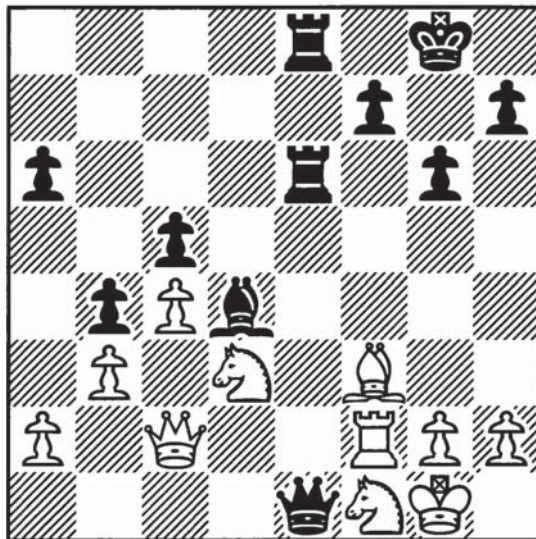


**Exercise:** What should Black do now? (difficulty level 3)

*Joel:* I would play 27...♙d4. There's no time for 28 ♙xc8 because of 28...♚e2 and wins.

*Boris:* Correct!

**27...♙d4! 28 ♙f3 ♚e6! 29 ♘b2 ♚ce8 30 ♘d3**



**Exercise:** And now what? (difficulty level 3)

**30...♙c3! 31 ♙d1**

White loses after either 31 ♙h1 ♙xf2 or 31 ♙d2 ♚e1 32 ♘xe1 ♚xe1 33 ♙f4 ♙d3 34 ♙e2 ♙xf2+ as well.

**31...♙f6! 0-1**

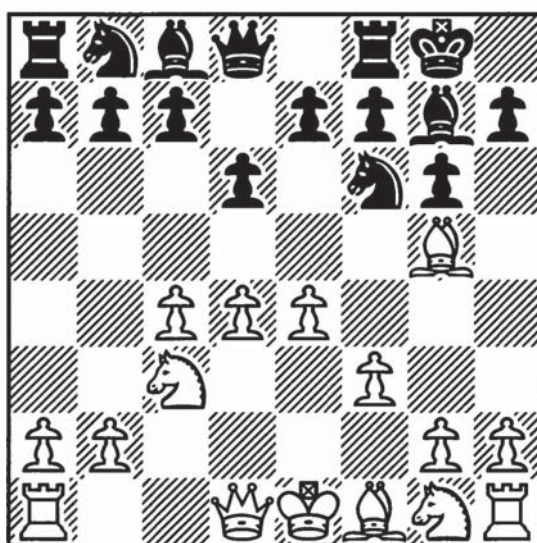
In this game Black's counterplay was prepared by clever prophylaxis. My opponent played aggressively in order to avoid an inferior position, but Black's counterattack overwhelmed him.

The previous game demonstrated an important principle: *Counterplay depends on appropriate prophylaxis*. The following game illustrates a more unusual topic: Provoking counterplay with the intention of exploiting the drawbacks created in the position as a result of the opponent's activity. My games against Kasparov in Volumes 1 and 2 are also good examples of this topic.

The game before us took place half a year after the first time I played Geller in the Soviet Championship, which we analyzed in Volume 2 (Game 27). In this game, from the first round of the Interzonal in Biel, Geller wanted to take revenge on me and opted for the King's Indian Defense, which was no longer his main opening (he had switched to the Queen's Gambit). One month before this event, I won a decisive game with the white pieces against Sigurjonsson in the Capablanca Memorial in Cuba, playing an unusual variation (at the time), which offered Black counterplay on the queenside. Geller hoped to exploit those opportunities against me.

*Game 14*  
**B.Gulko-E.Geller**  
Biel Interzonal 1976  
*King's Indian Defense*

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 ♙g7 4 e4 d6 5 f3 0-0 6 ♙g5



I played this system for eleven years, but in those days, before the internet, the games remained somewhat unknown. After this game, the system became popular, and espe-



cially so after my 1981 win against Kasparov, which reached a similar position via the Benoni (see Game 7 in Volume 1).

**Joel:** What's the difference between this variation and the more popular 6 ♖e3 - ? How is the idea of ♖g5 different from ♖e3 - ?

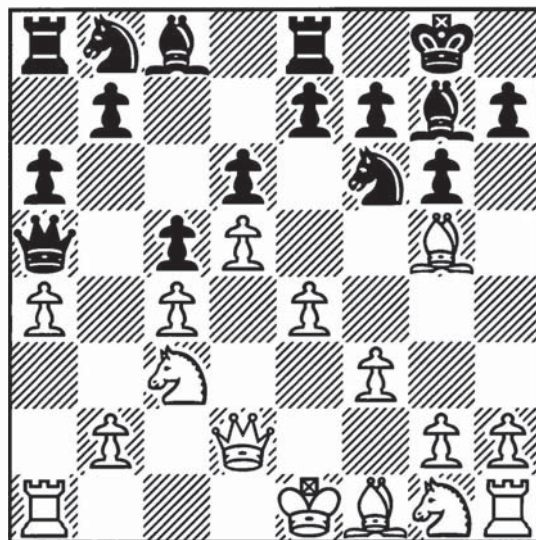
**Boris:** Historically, players have believed it necessary to play ♖e3 in order to prevent ...c7-c5. I've tried to show that ...c7-c5 is not such a great achievement for Black. In addition, somewhere around the time of this game, they started to realize that ♖e3 doesn't prevent ...c7-c5 anyway, as Black can play it as an interesting pawn sacrifice.

The purpose of 6 ♖g5 is to prevent ...e7-e5 because, after the exchange on e5 and d8, White wins a pawn with ♘d5. If Black plays 6...h6, then I can return the bishop to e3 and gain a tempo on the h6-pawn with a later ♚d2.

**6...c5 7 d5 a6 8 a4**

White should avoid 8 ♚d2 b5!?, when Black has a reasonable version of the Benko Gambit.

**8...♙e8 9 ♚d2 ♚a5?!**



Geller hoped for counterplay on the queenside. It was common to think that Black has to play on the side where he has an extra pawn, while White should play in the center where he has an extra pawn. After many years, it was discovered that in this variation Black should aim for kingside counterplay, since playing on the queenside is in White's favor, though it is not obvious why. More about this variation can be found in my game against Kasparov in Volume 1.

**10 ♘ge2 e6 11 ♘g3 exd5 12 cxd5 ♘bd7**

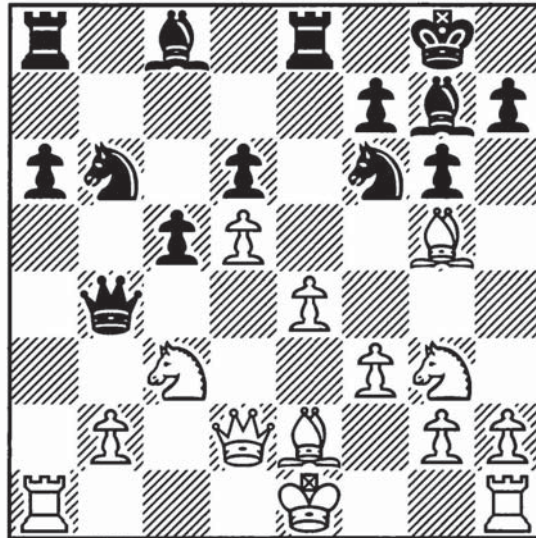
At this moment, Black could have fulfilled his dreams by playing 12...b5!?, but after 13 ♖e2 he would have to choose between two unattractive options: 1) play ...b5-b4 when, after ♘d1, White's knight will reach the crucial e3- and c4-squares with a very strong position; or 2) exchange pawns on a4, leading to a similar structure as in the game.

**13 ♖e2 ♚b4 14 a5! b5**



The attractive-looking 14...♔d4!? was not so good after either 15 ♖c2, when the black queen is not so comfortable in the center, or 15 ♘a4, heading for an endgame where White could prepare b2-b4 with a very strong position.

**15 axb6 ♗xb6**



**Exercise:** How to reduce the activity of Black's pieces? (difficulty level 3)

*Joel:* If 16 0-0, Black can play 16...♗c4 and White has to part with his bishop. I'd like to keep the knight out of c4, which I think I can do with 16 b3.

*Boris:* I'm afraid 16 b3 is a blunder because Black can play 16...♗fxd5. *Are there any weaknesses in the opponent's position that, if attacked, could force him on the defensive?* In other words, can you take the initiative?

*Joel:* The d6-pawn is weak and is usually an object of attack in these positions.

*Boris:* Probably the d6-pawn is the only weakness in Black's camp. Can you exploit this weakness?

*Joel:* I could play 16 ♕f4.

*Boris:* Exactly. Such a move forces Black to commit one of his pieces to passive defense.

**16 ♕f4! ♕f8**

Geller chose to reduce the activity of his bishop. The other option was 16...♔d8!?, though Black's mobility is lessened in either case.

*Joel:* So the idea is to *make active moves and tie down your opponent's pieces to defense.*

*Boris:* Yes, *and to establish your will over that of your opponent.* He has to play what you want him to play, not what he wants to play.

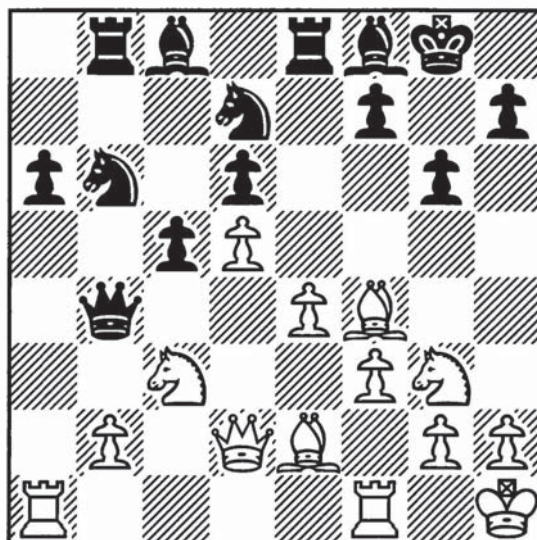
**17 0-0 ♗fd7**

After 17...♔d4+ 18 ♖xd4 cxd4 19 ♘a4, the position is favorable for White because of the weaknesses created in Black's camp by his activity on the queenside. Note that 17...♗c4 is not good either, as after 18 ♖c2, Black cannot take the b2-pawn.

Joel: Why not?

Boris: Because of 18...♙xb2 (or 18...♘xb2 19 ♜fb1 ♙d4+ 20 ♔h1 ♘c4 21 ♙xc4 ♜xc4 22 ♜a4 and the queen is caught) 19 ♙xb2 ♘xb2 20 ♜fb1 ♜b8 21 ♜a2, winning a piece. Both variations work because of the absence of the dark-squared bishop from the long diagonal, which 16 ♙f4 induced.

**18 ♔h1! ♜b8**



**Exercise:** How can White prevent 19...♘c4 - ? (difficulty level 3)

Joel: 19 ♙d3 looks horrible after 19...♘e5, which is a real accomplishment for Black; but 19 ♙c2 looks good because if 19...♘c4 then 20 ♜a4.

Boris: You are correct about 19 ♙c2, though not about 20 ♜a4?, which allows 20...♙xb2 and looks good for Black. But 19 ♙c2 doesn't allow Black to move his knight with gain of time. Is there something else you can play beside 20 ♜a4 - ?

Joel: After 19...♘c4, neither 20 ♙xc4 nor 20 b3 works for White.

Boris: Is it possible to attack the queen on b4 and the knight on c4 with one move?

Joel: 20 ♘a2.

Boris: Yes!

**19 ♙c2!**

White could win a pawn by playing 19 ♙xa6? ♙xa6 20 ♜xa6 ♘c4 21 ♙e2 ♘xb2 22 ♘a2 ♙d4 23 ♙xd6 ♙xd6 24 ♜xd6, but after 24...♘d3, Black threatens ...♜b2 and White can hardly defend.

What is important is not to win a pawn but to extinguish the activity of Black's pieces. *When there are permanent weaknesses, it is important to eliminate temporary factors (e.g. the activity of your opponent's pieces), while maintaining those permanent factors (e.g. weak squares, pawn structure) which can be exploited later.* Here, as in my previous game with Ivanov, we see how appropriate prophylaxis can turn your opponent's activity in your favor.

### 19...♘a8!?

Black sacrifices a pawn, trying to get rid of his bishop on c8 (which is not useful to him at all) and bring his other pieces to active positions.

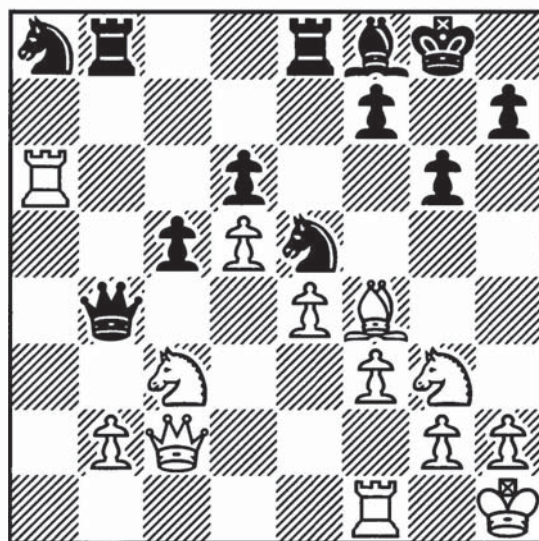
As we just discussed, 19...♘c4?? would have been bad because of 20 ♘a2!, while 19...♘e5?! 20 ♙fb1 is clearly better for White. Instead, 19...c4! might have been the best option, but after 20 ♙a3, White still has a clear advantage, having extinguished Black's activity. The next moves will be ♙fb1 and ♘f1-d2, when all of White's pieces are ready to play against Black's weaknesses on the queenside.

### 20 ♙xa6 ♙xa6!?

Black didn't want to go into an inferior endgame after 20...♙xb2!? 21 ♙xb2 ♙xb2 22 ♙b5 ♘ab6 23 ♙fb1! ♙xb1+ 24 ♙xb1, despite material equality. White threatens to increase the pressure with 25 ♙c6 and ♘b5, or to simply bring the g3-knight across to c4 through f1 and d2.

### 21 ♙xa6 ♘e5

Now if 21...♙xb2 22 ♙xb2 ♙xb2 23 ♙xd6, Black wouldn't have any compensation for the pawn.

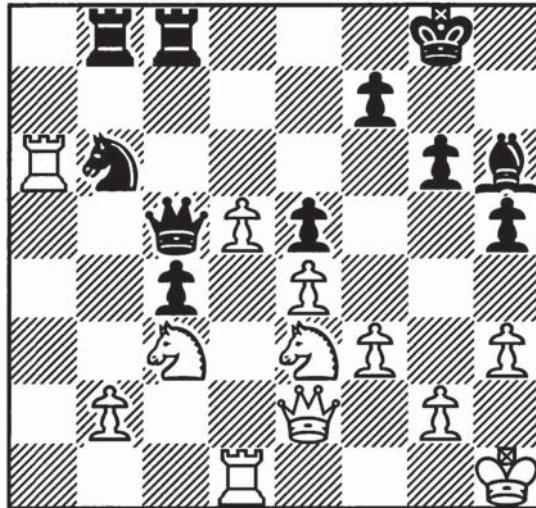


### 22 ♙xe5! dxe5!

The decision of a mature player. After the natural-looking 22...♙xe5 23 f4 ♙ee8 24 e5! dxe5 25 ♘ge4 ♙g7 26 f5 ♙xb2 27 ♙d3, White would obtain a tremendous attack, following a well-known pattern seen in the famous game J.Penrose-M.Tal, Leipzig Olympiad 1960.

### 23 ♙b1 c4 24 ♘f1 ♘b6 25 ♘e3 ♙ec8 26 h3 ♙c5 27 ♙e2 h5 28 ♙d1 ♙h6



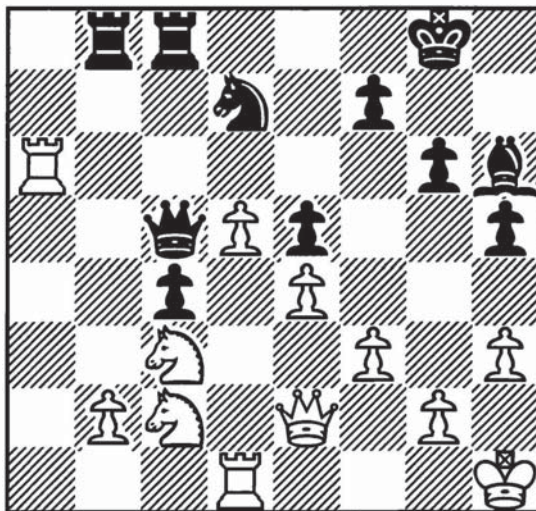


**Exercise:** What should White play? And with what idea? (difficulty level 5)

*Joel:* I want to play 29 d6 which looks active, but it doesn't work because my knight on e3 is hanging.

*Boris:* It is a very difficult task. If White doesn't find an active plan, he can be outplayed step by step because of his weaknesses on the dark squares. For example, the black bishop will go to f4 and the queen to g3 with a dangerous attack. Black doesn't have any bad pieces, which is a sign of a great player. He is down a pawn but has chances to attack. As it happens, White can exploit the exposed position of Black's queen but it's not obvious how, which is the reason this task is a level 5.

29 ♖c2! ♜d7



**Exercise:** How to proceed with White's plan? (difficulty level 3)

## Lessons with a Grandmaster 3

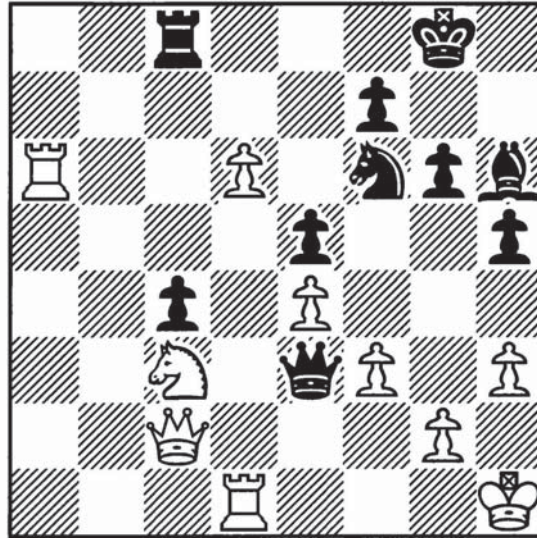
*Joel:* Now I think 30 d6 works, with the idea of 31 ♖d5.

*Boris:* Yes! That was the idea behind 29 ♘c2 – it covers the b4-square and suddenly Black's queen doesn't have any safe squares.

**30 d6! ♖xb2**

After 30...♖c6 31 ♖xc6 ♜xc6 32 ♘a3, Black's position is hopeless. So, instead, Geller sacrifices the exchange, hoping still to exploit the weakness of the dark squares in White's camp.

**31 ♖d5 ♖xc2 32 ♜xc2 ♜e3 33 ♖d1 ♘f6**



**Exercise:** If 34 d7 good? (difficulty level 1)

*Joel:* No, I don't think so. Black can take on d7 and White cannot recapture with the rook because of 34 d7 ♘xd7 35 ♖xd7?? ♜e1+.

*Boris:* And after 36 ♔h2 - ?

*Joel:* Then 36...♙f4+.

*Boris:* And after 37 g3 - ?

*Joel:* Black has 37...♜xg3+.

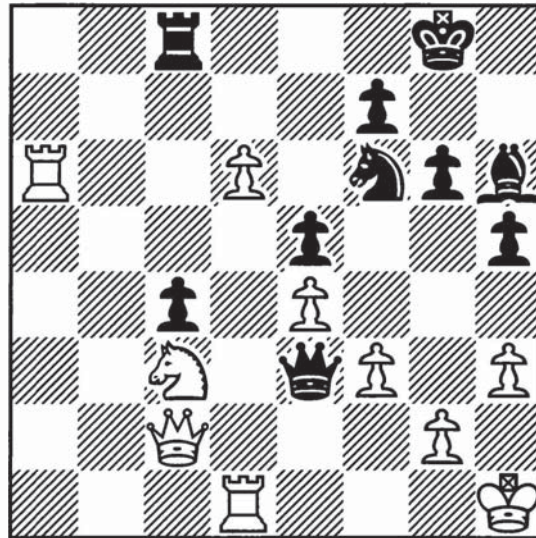
*Boris:* And after 38 ♔h1 - ?

*Joel:* Black has 38...♜xh3+ 39 ♔g1 ♙e3+.

*Boris:* Correct! In this line White could keep the upper hand by playing 35 ♘d5 ♜c5 36 ♖b1, but the solution in the game is more practical.

**34 ♘e2 ♘d7 35 ♘c3 ♘f6**



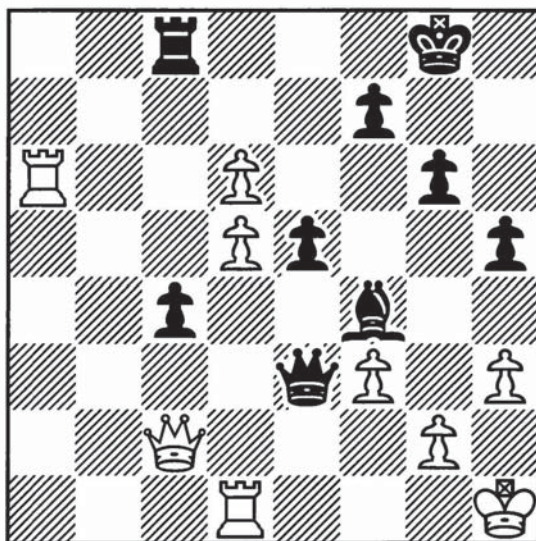


**Exercise:** Black plans ...h5-h4, ...♘h5 and ...♙f4.  
What would you do here? (difficulty level 3)

**Joel:** I want to play 36 ♘d5 ♘xd5 37 d7 ♖d8 38 exd5, but again Black can simply take on d7.

**Boris:** You are correct that White has to change the character of the position by playing 36 ♘d5!, but after 36...♘xd5, White should simply recapture with the pawn and not throw in the intermezzo d6-d7.

**36 ♘d5! ♘xd5 37 exd5 ♙f4**



**Exercise:** Find the win. (difficulty level 3)



Joel: 38 d7, followed by 39 ♖xg6, looks winning.

Boris: Correct!

**38 d7! ♖d8 39 ♖xg6+ ♔f8**

If 39...fxg6, then 40 ♖xg6+ and 41 ♖f6+ etc.

**40 ♖f6 ♗xd7 41 ♖h7 1-0**

I think this game has several points of interest. First, White provoked Black to take action on the queenside. After that, White's task was to extinguish the activity of Black's pieces and exploit the weakness that Black created on the queenside in trying to take the initiative. Geller played as strong players do and sacrificed a pawn to change the character of the position. Here I demonstrated a crucial principle: *When you have a material advantage, do not to play as if the material advantage guarantees you victory. Stay aggressive and find an active plan.* The contrary mistake is very common, especially among less experienced players, who often stop playing aggressively when they obtain a material advantage, thinking it will automatically bring them victory – it doesn't, and more often than not, you cede the initiative to your opponent.

## Chapter Five

# The Struggle in the Center

The influence of the center on the entire battlefield has been known for a long time. In the 1600s, Greco discussed the importance of occupying the center with pawns as part of his analysis of the Italian Game. The hypermodern school of 1920s, developed by Nimzowitsch and Réti, argued that what was most important was influencing the center with pieces. This controversy between classical and hypermodern chess shows that there is no clear recipe for handling the center. In this chapter, we'll consider some problems that arise from different pawn structures in the center.

### Game 15 E.Vasiukov-B.Gulko Volgodonsk 1981 French Defense

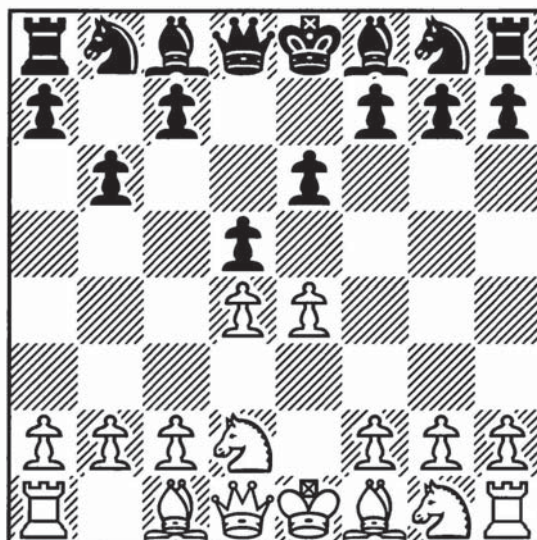
**1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♞d2**

**Boris:** Petrosian played the French Defense from time to time. He said that, when his opponent played 3 ♞d2 instead of 3 ♞c3, he felt as if he were given amnesty.

**Joel:** What is the difference?

**Boris:** With 3 ♞d2, the white knight cannot be pinned, and the d4-pawn can be supported by c2-c3, which is consistent with Philidor's rule not to place pieces before pawns. However, this move has its disadvantages: namely that the dark-squared bishop is blocked and the knight on d2 is restricted by Black's pawn on d5, so it has to be relocated from d2. In the summer of 1981, I analyzed the move 3...b6, which I studied in an effort to exploit the disadvantages of the knight being placed on d2.

### 3...b6!?



In the case of the popular line 3...♘f6 4 e5 ♘fd7 5 ♙d3 c5 6 c3 ♘c6 7 ♘e2, White's knights will be very comfortably placed on e2 and f3, so Black waits until White develops his king's knight to f3 before transposing to this line. A similar idea is behind Romanishin's waiting move 3...♙e7 in this line.

*Joel:* But White doesn't have to develop his king's knight to f3?

*Boris:* Of course White has alternatives. In the case of 4 c3, Black can transpose to the Rubinstein Variation with 4...dxe4, as I did against Yudasin in the USSR Championship later that year. White can also opt for 4 ♙d3, as Dorfman played against me in the same championship.

*Joel:* In general, you are trying to take advantage of the drawbacks associated with certain moves and how those moves fit into different systems.

*Boris:* Yes.

### 4 ♘gf3 ♘f6 5 e5 ♘fd7 6 ♙d3

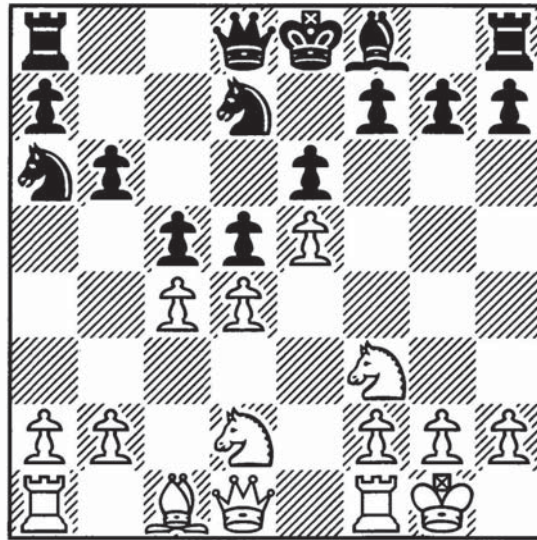
The idea behind 3...b6, in addition to it being a waiting move, is to exchange light-squared bishops, which is Black's worst-placed piece in the French. My opponent makes this exchange easy, but he had an interesting alternative in 6 c3!? c5 7 ♙b5! ♙a6 8 a4. In the case of an exchange on b5, the knight on b8 would not have a good square to develop to and, as a result, both knights would be placed poorly.

### 6...♙a6 7 ♙xa6

If White planned to play c2-c4, it would be more logical to play it immediately, before the exchange of light-squared bishops. Nevertheless, after 7 c4!? c5, Black would still have a decent game.

### 7...♙xa6 8 0-0 c5 9 c4!?





White has the superior development, so he wants to open the game. Unfortunately, the arising pawn structure isn't completely open, so White cannot profit from his extra tempi. More solid was 9 c3, when it would be difficult for Black to obtain counterplay because his pieces lack active squares. Now the position in the center becomes more tense.

**9... ♕e7**

More cautious was 9... ♘c7, so that I could take back with the knight in the case of an exchange on d5. I opted for this course later against Campora (see the next game). Here, I wasn't opposed to taking back with the pawn.

*Joel:* Generally the queen's knight belongs on c6 in the French. So much so that, even after the desirable exchange of light-squared bishops on a6, as you achieved, the knight should make its way to c6 by returning to b8. Can you explain why ... ♘c7 is not good generally in the typical French pawn structure, and why you could have played it here?

*Boris:* We don't have a typical pawn structure for the French here because Vasiukov played c2-c4. Therefore, the knight could be useful on c7, controlling the critical d5- and e6-squares. In the standard French structure, the knight on c7 would have no prospects.

**10 ♖e2?!**

It would have been more promising for White to alter the pawn structure immediately by playing 10 cxd5 exd5 11 ♖e1 O-O 12 ♘f1 ♘c7, when the knight on f1 would find good squares on e3 and g3.

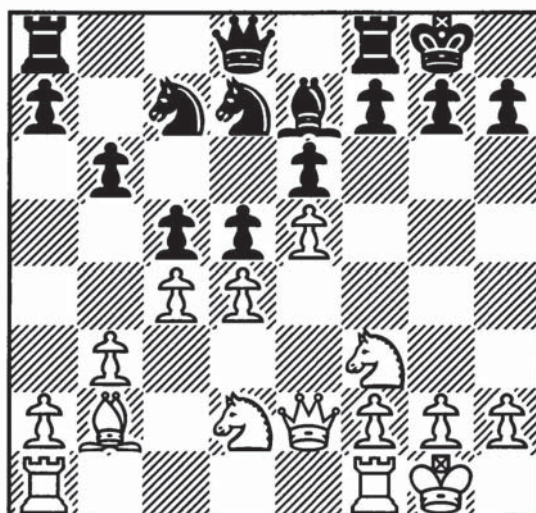
**10... ♘c7**

Now you can see why c7 is the best square for the knight. If I had played 10... ♘ab8?, White would have 11 cxd5 exd5 12 e6! with a clear advantage. With the knight on c7, I prevent the opening of the position and preserve the existing pawn structure.

*Joel:* Is that because you got rid of your light-squared bishop? I heard that in the French you cannot exchange light-squared bishops and engineer an ...f7-f6 break because the e6-square becomes too weak.

*Boris:* Yes, that's true. Here it is an unusual pawn structure for the French Defense.

11 b3 0-0 12 ♖b2



**Exercise:** How does Black go about improving the placement of his pieces? (difficulty level 3)

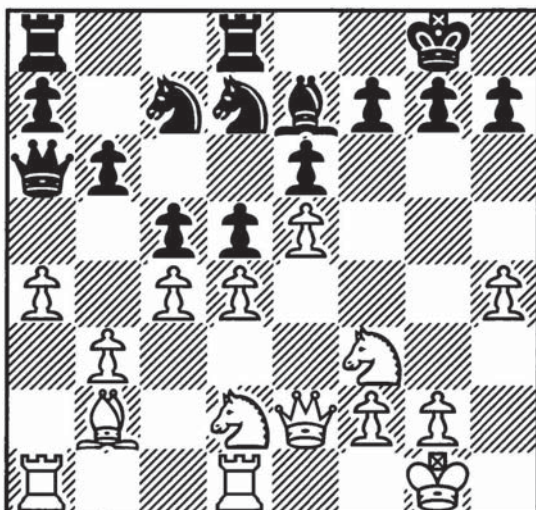
**Joel:** I think Black needs to play on the queenside. I'd like to leave my minor pieces where they are, bring the f8-rook to c8, and support ...b6-b5 with my queen, so I'd play 12...♙b8.

**Boris:** I don't like your answer because Black shouldn't play with pawns in this position. His pieces aren't well placed, so he should look for a way to improve his pieces and bring them to good squares. The first task is to improve the queen, which Black accomplishes by playing 12...♙c8! with the idea of moving it to a6 and connecting Black's rooks.

12...♙c8! 13 ♖fd1

Black would have done better prevent Black's idea of ...♙a6 by playing 13 cxd5! ♘xd5 14 ♘e4. In this case, the black queen would find a place for herself on b7 instead.

13...♙a6! 14 a4 ♖fd8 15 h4?!





**Exercise:** How does Black further improve the position of his pieces? (difficulty level 3)

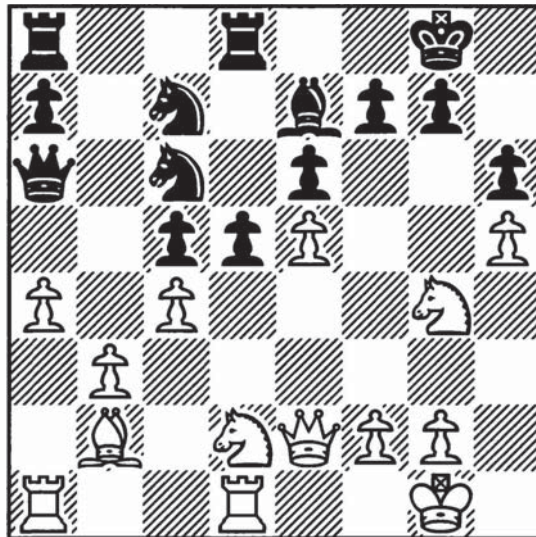
*Joel:* I would play 15...♘b8, heading to b4 via c6.

*Boris:* Yes. The knight on d7 is clearly misplaced. With 15 h4 White intends to start an attack on the kingside, but the game shows that this plan was unworkable. It was safer to continue improving his own pieces by playing 15 ♖ac1.

**15...♘b8! 16 h5 h6 17 dxc5?!**

My opponent opens the long diagonal for his bishop with the hope of bringing his knight to f6 in an attack. The serious drawback to this plan is that the b3-pawn becomes weak.

**17...bxc5 18 ♘h2 ♘c6 19 ♘g4**



**Exercise:** How should Black proceed? (difficulty level 2)

*Joel:* I don't want to play 19...d4, even though it blocks the b2-bishop, because 20 ♘e4 looks strong. I did like the idea of playing 19...♖d7, defending the seventh rank and creating the possibility of doubling rooks.

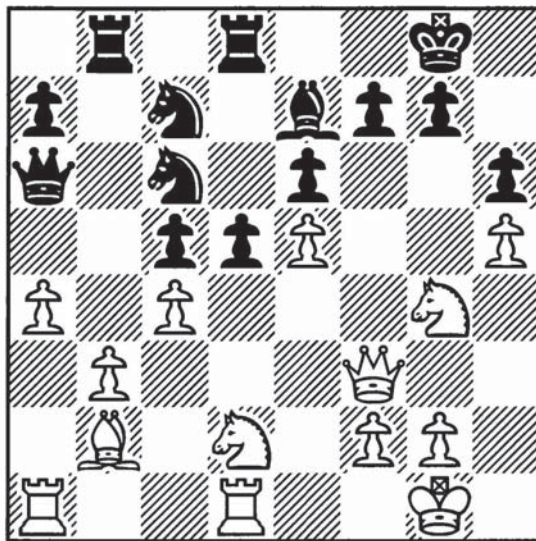
*Boris:* You're right that 19...d4 would be a terrible positional blunder. White would play ♘e4 and ♖d3, when his attack on the kingside is very dangerous.

In this position, White's plan is ♘f1 and to bring his rook into play along the third rank, with the idea of swinging it over to the kingside to support a kingside attack. The correct move, therefore, is 19...♖ab8, which activates my rook and prevents White from going about his plan because the b3-pawn would hang. As we saw in the last two games in the chapter on counterplay, the method of prophylaxis is a very powerful tool for choosing a move.



19...♖ab8! 20 ♖f3

Clearly, 20 ♘f6+? gxf6 21 exf6 ♙f8 22 ♖g4+ ♚h8 23 ♘f3 ♗xb3 doesn't work for White.



**Exercise:** What should Black do here? (difficulty level 3)

Joel: I don't know.

Boris: Okay, let me help. In strategic positions, you have to improve the position of your pieces, prevent your opponent from doing the same, and look for tactical opportunities. Here, we have to do all three at once!

Joel: I'm still struggling.

Boris: What is White's plan?

Joel: To bring the knight on d2 into the attack with ♘f1.

Boris: Right, and what tactical idea does White have?

Joel: He wants to play 21 ♘f6+.

Boris: Right, and after 21...gxf6, White has 22 exf6 ♙f8 23 ♖g3 ♚h8 24 ♖xc7. So how can you prevent White's idea, his tactical shot, and develop a piece to a better square? Black again has to think prophylactically.

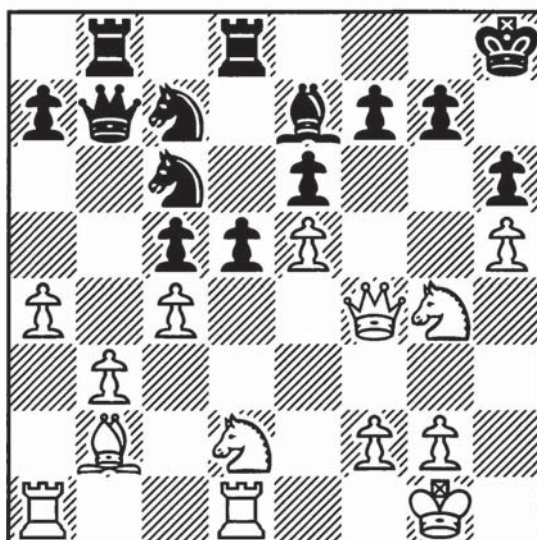
20...♗b7! 21 ♖g3 ♚f8 22 ♗d3! ♚g8

Of course Black cannot allow the white queen into h7.

23 ♖g3 ♚h8!

It was too risky to answer White's flank attack with the classical counterattack in the center, because after 23...dxc4?! 24 ♘xh6+ ♚f8 25 ♘xf7! ♚xf7 26 ♖g6+ ♚g8 27 h6 ♘e8 28 ♘e4, White has a strong attack; for example, 28...♗xd1+ 29 ♗xd1 ♖xb3 30 ♘f6+ ♙xf6 31 exf6 ♖xd1+ 32 ♚h2 ♗d6+ 33 g3 ♖f8 34 f7+! ♖xf7 35 h7+ and White wins.

24 ♖f4



**Exercise:** Here the f7-pawn is hanging. Does Black have to accept a draw with 24...♔f8 etc, or is there a way to obtain an advantage? (difficulty level 4)

**Joel:** The answer can't be a draw, so I have to go in for the complications. I guess I'd go with 24...♔g5 when, after 25 ♚xf7 ♜df8 26 ♚g6 ♔xd2 27 ♜xd2 ♚xb3, there are chances for both sides.

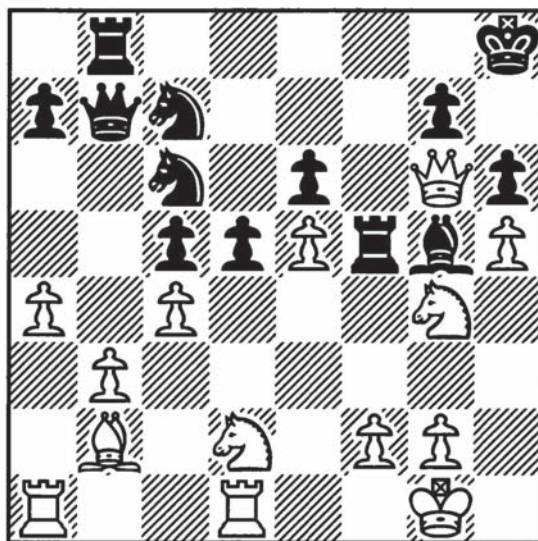
**Boris:** You found the right move and the right idea, but the variations are very complicated. Your line is not completely correct.

**24...♔g5!**

Prophylaxis again. Black extinguishes White's initiative by exchanging his modest-looking knight on d2. In the case of the straightforward 24...dxc4 25 ♚xf7 cxb3 26 ♜e4 ♜d4 27 ♜gf6, this knight would create dangerous kingside threats for White.

**25 ♚xf7 ♔xd2!**

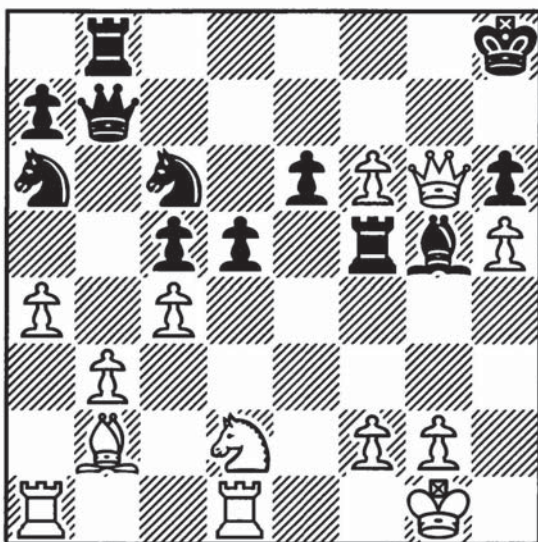
Much stronger than 25...♜f8?! 26 ♚g6 ♜f5 (it's too late to take on d2 as in your line because, after 26...♔xd2 27 ♜f6! gxf6 28 ♜xd2, White's attack is too strong; that's why I took on d2 immediately in the game) and now:



**Exercise:** What should White do? (difficulty level 2)

*Joel:* I would play 27 ♖f6.

*Boris:* Right, otherwise White has to resign since Black threatened ...♗e7, trapping the queen. Whereas after 27 ♖f6! gxf6 28 exf6 ♖a6



**Exercise:** How should White proceed? (difficulty level 4)

*Joel:* I don't see a good continuation. 29 f7+ doesn't work because of 29...d4. I looked at 29 ♗e4, but that doesn't work either because Black can again just block the diagonal by advancing his d-pawn. And 29 ♜g7+ is clearly no good, since Black simply exchanges queens.



**Boris:** I agree with your assessment of those moves. White's trumps in this position are the strong f6-pawn, the strong bishop on the long diagonal, and the queen on g6. To take advantage of these factors White has to find the beautiful 29 ♖e8+!! ♜h7 (if 29...♙xe8 then 30 f7+ and 31 fxe8 ♖ wins a rook) 30 ♖xe6 ♙f4 31 cxd5 (31 g3 is even stronger) 31...♞d8 32 ♖e7+ ♖xe7 33 fxe7 ♙xe7 34 ♙e5 and White is winning.

**26 ♙xd2 ♙f8 27 ♖g6 ♞e7 28 ♖b1?!**

By sacrificing the f7-pawn and exchanging the d2-knight, Black extinguished White's initiative. Now the decisive factor becomes the weakness of White's queenside. This sudden turn disheartened my opponent and he lost without a struggle.

Here 28 ♖c2 was more stubborn, when Black has a choice: 28...♖xb3 (28...d4!? may be even stronger; Black has a clear advantage because White's pieces are misplaced and his pawns are weak) 29 cxd5 (Black is better after 29 ♙a3 dxc4 30 ♙xc5 ♞cd5 as well) 29...♖xc2 30 ♙xc2 ♞cxd5 with advantage for Black. Note that White doesn't have 31 ♙a3 on account of 31...♙f4.

**28...♖xb3 29 cxd5 ♞cxd5 30 ♖c1?!**

30 ♞f6 gxf6 31 exf6 wouldn't have worked because of 31...♞f5 32 f7+ ♜h7 33 ♖e4 ♙xf7 34 ♖xe6 ♞f4 and Black is winning.

**30...♙f4?!**

This gives White the opportunity to complicate the position. More prudent was 30...♙b4!? or 30...♞f5 31 ♖xc5 ♞f4 with a big advantage in either case.

**31 ♙a3?!**

Geller misses his chance. After 31 ♞f6! ♙c8 (not 31...gxf6? 32 exf6 ♞xf6 33 ♙e5 ♙f5 34 ♙b2 and White is better) 32 ♞xd5 exd5 (or 32...♞xd5 33 ♙xd5 exd5 34 ♖xf4 ♖xb2 35 ♙e1 ♖b4) 33 ♙a3 ♖b4, White can still fight, albeit in an inferior position.

**31...♖b4 32 ♞e3 ♞xe3 33 ♙xe3 ♞d5 34 ♙g3 ♙c4**

Now Black is winning. The strategy starting on move 3, and continuing with the exchange on move 25, leaves White with a hopeless bishop.

**35 ♖d1**

White would lose after 35 ♖e1 ♙c2 36 ♙c1 ♙a2 37 a5 c4 as well.

**35...♖xa4 36 ♖e1 ♙c2! 37 ♙a3? ♖c4 38 ♙xa7 ♙bxb2 39 ♙xc2 ♖xc2 40 ♙a8+ ♜h7 41 ♙a1 c4 42 ♙c1 ♖d3 0-1**

The time scramble is over, so White resigned.

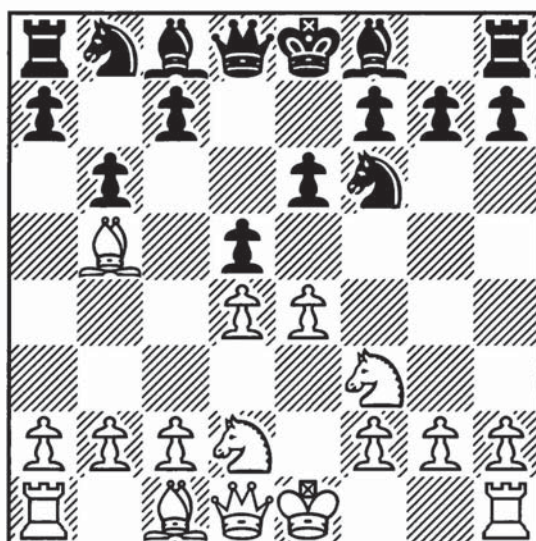
It is interesting how Black coordinated his pieces after the opening. It shows that, even with best positional play, we need to be precise in the tactical struggle, which occurred in the second part of the game.

The next game will illustrate the influence of weak squares in the center and the difficult topic of the coordination of knights in the middlegame.

Game 16  
D.Campora-B.Gulko  
Biel 1988  
French Defense

It was the last round of the tournament, and I needed to win in order to catch the leader and tie for first place.

1 e4 e6 2 d4 d5 3 ♘d2 b6!? 4 ♘gf3 ♘f6 5 ♙b5+!?



With this check White forces Black to move his pawn to c6. This can be significant because it deprives Black's b8-knight of its natural square.

Joel: I see most people block the check with ...♙d7. Can you explain why you didn't and in what positions it is a good or bad idea?

Boris: ...♙d7 is a good reaction when White's pawn is already on e5. Here, White would return his bishop to d3, when Black's bishop is misplaced on d7. My intention was to exchange light-squared bishops with ...♙a6, and playing ...♙d7 would make that impossible.

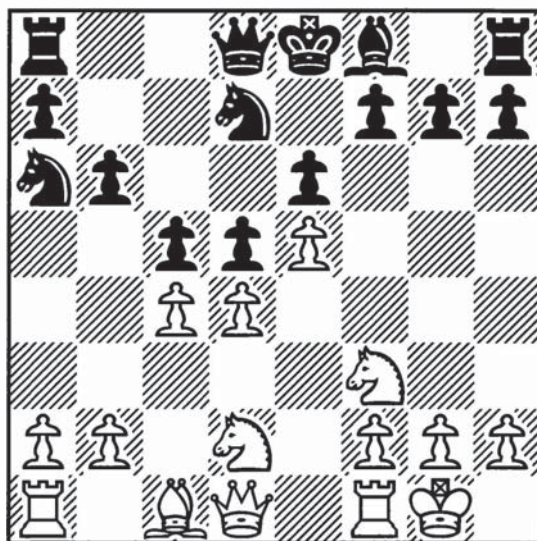
Joel: Why does having the pawn on e5 make a difference?

Boris: When the center is closed, Black can generate counterplay with ...c7-c5, in which case d7 is a good square for the bishop. When the center is open, on the other hand, the bishop would be awkwardly placed there.

5...c6 6 ♙d3 ♙a6 7 ♙xa6 ♘xa6 8 e5

Boris: White can't exploit the vulnerable position of the knight on a6 with 8 exd5 cxd5 (not 8...exd5? 9 ♖e2+ ♖e7 10 ♘e5 and White has a clear advantage) 9 c4 (threatening ♖a4+) because simply 9...♘c7 gives Black a safe position.

8...♘d7 9 0-0 c5 10 c4!?



Via a different move order there suddenly arises the same position as in the previous game. Campora, like Vasiukov, hopes to utilize his lead in development by opening things up. As I said before, keeping the center closed with 10 c3 would have made it more difficult for Black to obtain counterplay.

**10...♖c7**

Deviating from my game with Vasiukov, where I played ...♕e7 in this position.

**11 cxd5 ♘xd5**

I was unwilling to play the position that could have arisen after 11...exd5?! 12 ♘b1!, since my d5-pawn could become weak. While I was ready to play this against Vasiukov, I didn't think he would go for it, because he is a very aggressive player who strives to take the initiative rather than play more strategic chess. Campora, on the other hand, was a very strategically oriented player and I could easily see him going in for this line.

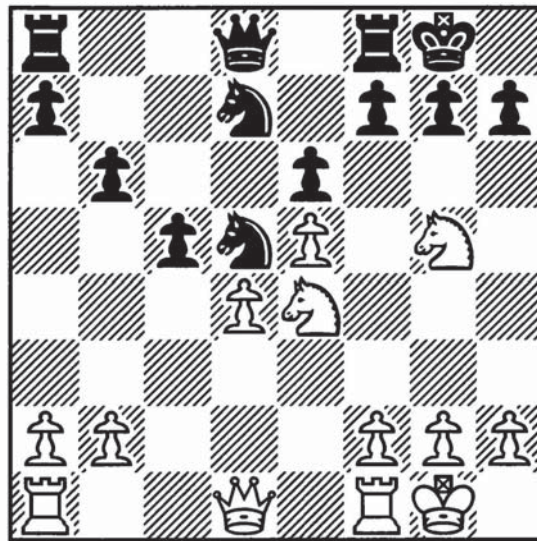
**12 ♘e4 ♕e7 13 ♕g5!**

White's strategic plan is clear: he wants to obtain the d6-square for his knight.

**13...0-0**

Black avoids 13...♕xg5? 14 ♘fxg5 0-0.





**Exercise:** Does the typical sacrifice on h7 work here?  
Calculate variations. (difficulty level 3)

**Joel:** Well, after 15 ♖xh7! ♕xh7 16 ♜h5+ ♔g8 17 ♖g5, I don't see a way to avoid mate except for 17...♞e8, which looks terrible.

**Boris:** Right, but you have an extra knight, so can you use it to defend?

**Joel:** Yes, I can play 17...♘f6 18 exf6 ♖xf6 19 ♜h4 ♜xd4 and Black is better, so the sacrifice doesn't work.

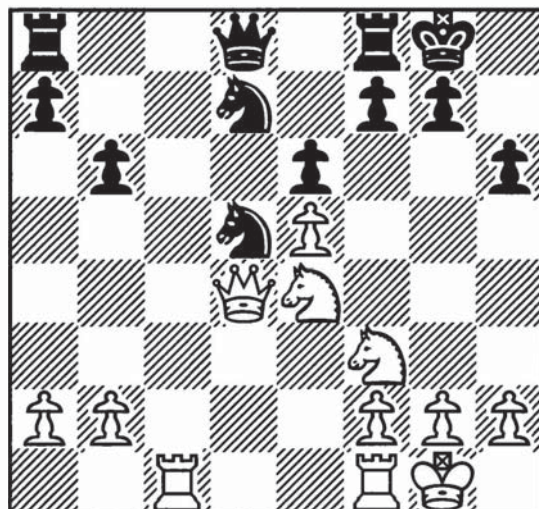
**Boris:** So you conclude that it doesn't work, but can you improve on White's play after 17...♘f6 - ?

**Joel:** I don't see what else he could do.

**Boris:** It is not easy to see, but White has 18 ♜h4! cxd4 and now 19 exf6 ♖xf6 20 ♜ad1 (threatening the d4-pawn as well as ♜d3-h3) 20...d3 21 ♜fe1, threatening ♜e3-h3 with a big attack. In this line Black can defend with 20...♜d5!; for example, 21 ♜d3 (probably stronger is 21 ♜xd4 ♜f5 22 ♜f4, when the black king is not safe) 21...♜fc8! 22 ♜h3 ♔f8 23 ♜h8+ ♔e7 24 ♜xg7 e5 25 ♜h6 ♜c6, but not everyone would willingly go in for such variations.

The key is that, by playing 18 ♜h4!, White forces Black to take on d4, which partly closes the center and prevents Black from gaining counterplay by using the d4-square for his queen, as he did in your variation with the immediate 18...exf6. *In an attack on the flank it is important to restrict counterplay in the center.* So, in the end, it looks like the sacrifice does work.

**14 ♜c1 cxd4 15 ♜xd4 ♔xg5 16 ♖exg5 h6 17 ♖e4**



**Exercise:** How to coordinate Black's pieces? (difficulty level 4)

*Joel:* I like 17...Qb8 with the idea of keeping an eye on e5 and playing on the queenside.

*Boris:* You're right that you need to find room for your queen, but this doesn't work because White will play B1c6, Nd6, Bfc1 with terrible pressure on Black's position.

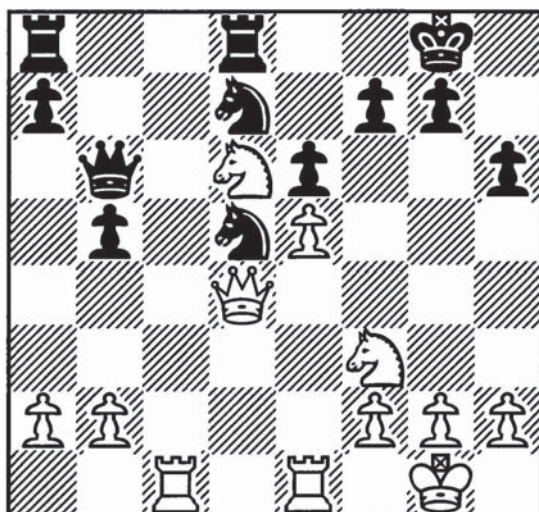
*Joel:* Does it make sense to contest the c-file with 17...Bac8 - ?

*Boris:* After 18 Nd6, you'd have the same problems. In the game, I played 17...b5!, opening squares on the queenside for Black's queen and obtaining decent routes for his rooks.

**17...b5! 18 Nd6?!**

The position after 18 Bc6 Qa5 19 a3 b4 is approximately equal. Instead, the immediate 18 a3!? deserved attention, not determining too early where White's pieces will be placed. It will become clear shortly why the game continuation is an inaccuracy.

**18...Qb6! 19 Bfe1 Bfd8**



**Exercise:** What does White have to play? (difficulty level 5)

*Joel:* Can't White take on b6 and then capture the pawn on b5?

*Boris:* That's exactly what happened in the game. This position is very difficult to understand: you have to realize that White's proud knight on d6 is actually poorly placed because it doesn't coordinate well with his other pieces and is in fact a tactical weakness.

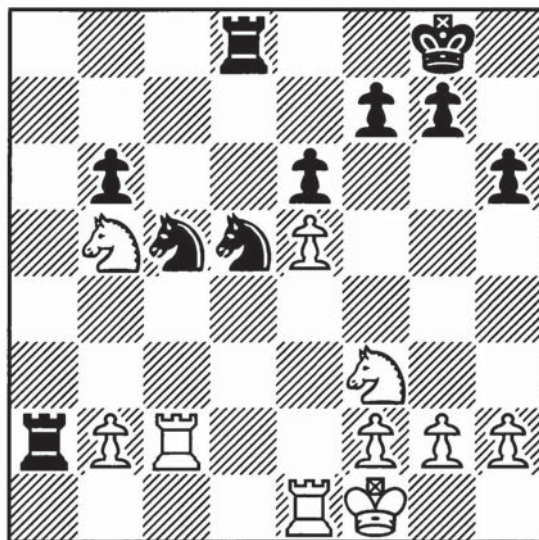
The only way for White to maintain equality is to withdraw it with 20 ♖f5!, when 20... ♜ac8 is approximately equal. From f5 the knight can jump to d4, after which White's pieces will be well coordinated and the e5-pawn protected. The knight would be well placed on d6 if it prevented Black from coordinating his pieces, but I solved that problem with my move 17...b5!.

20 ♜xb6? axb6 21 ♘xb5

Note that the desirable 21 a3 would be met by 21... ♜xe5, exploiting the weakness of the knight on d6.

21... ♜xa2 22 ♜c2 ♘c5 23 ♙f1?!

Here 23 g3 was more precise, covering the f4-square.



**Exercise:** Evaluate the position. What should Black play? (difficulty level 2)

*Joel:* Black's pieces look more active and he has several good moves, I think, such as 23... ♘d3 or 23... ♘b4.

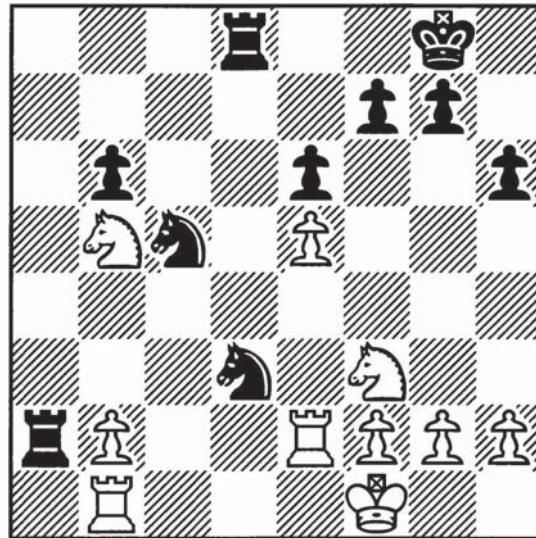
*Boris:* You're right that Black is better. The problem for White is that the e5-pawn, while strong in the middlegame where it can assist in an attack on Black's king, is weak in the endgame.

Now Black has to develop the initiative. The d5-square was extremely important in the middlegame, and the knight sitting there helped Black overcome his problems. In the end-



game, Black's object of attack is b2. The knight on c5 can attack this pawn from a4, whereas the knight on d5 cannot; therefore the d5-knight needs to be repositioned so that it, too, can attack b2. Hence, although 23...♞d3 is natural, your alternative 23...♞b4! is stronger.

**23...♞b4! 24 ♖ce2 ♞bd3 25 ♖b1**



**Exercise:** How does Black develop his initiative? (difficulty level 3)

*Joel:* Not sure.

*Boris:* Which piece can be improved?

*Joel:* The rook on d8.

*Boris:* Right. How can you improve it?

*Joel:* By moving it to the a-file.

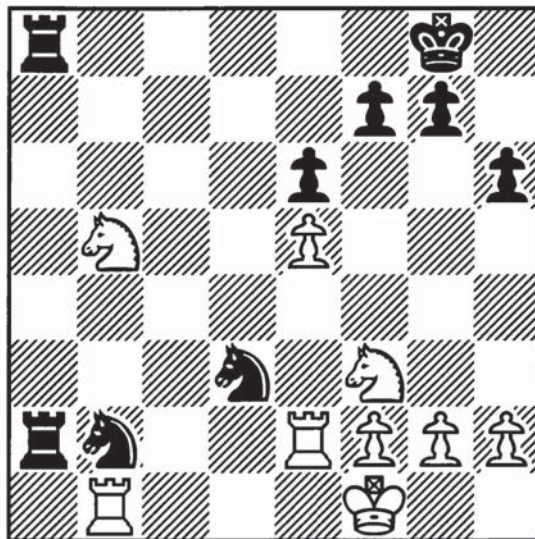
*Boris:* Correct. Black increases the pressure and threatens 26...♖a1.

**25...♖da8! 26 ♞a3 ♞a4!**

*Boris:* As we've already noted, this possibility is why the knight on d5 and not the knight on c5 had to be on d3. Another way could be 26...♖a4, with the idea of ...♖b4, when White's b-pawn will fall.

**27 ♞e1**

Playing 27 ♞c4 wouldn't have helped in view of 27...b5 28 ♞d6 ♞axb2 and if 29 ♞xb5 then:

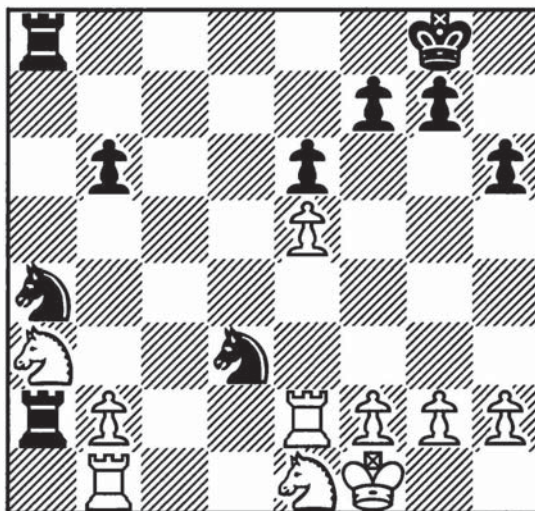


**Exercise:** Find a forced win for Black. (difficulty level 3)

*Joel:* 29...♖a1! 30 ♜c3 ♜xb1+ 31 ♜xb1 ♜a1 32 ♜fd2 ♜c4!.

*Boris:* Very good!

Returning to the game continuation:



**Exercise:** How should Black proceed? (difficulty level 2)

*Joel:* White is cramped so I don't want to exchange pieces. I can't play 27...♜dxb2 because of 28 ♜c4, so that leaves 27...♜b4, 27...♜c5, or 27...♜f4. I'm not sure which is best, but I guess I'd go with 27...♜f4 since it comes with tempo.

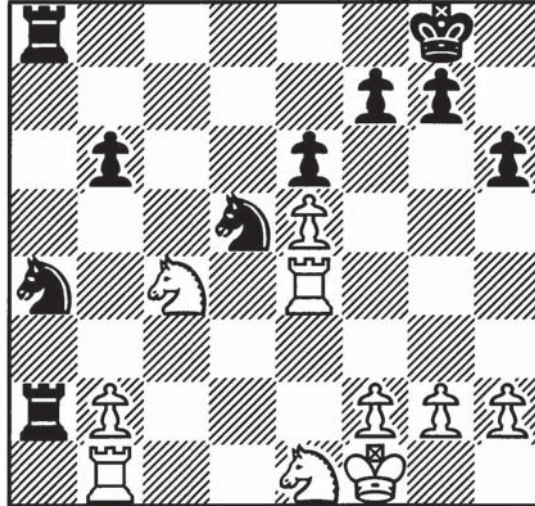
*Boris:* Very good! The b2-pawn is defenseless. Now Black returns his knight to d5 to protect b6.

**27...♟f4! 28 ♖e4**

After 28 ♖d2 ♟xb2, Black would have a decisive advantage; for example, 29 ♖dxb2 ♖xb2 30 ♖xb2 ♖xa3 31 ♖xb6 ♖a1 32 ♖b3 ♟xg2 33 ♟xg2 ♖xe1 34 f4 g5 with a winning rook endgame.

**28...♟d5 29 ♟ac2**

In the case of 29 ♟c4:



*Exercise:* What would you play? (difficulty level 1)

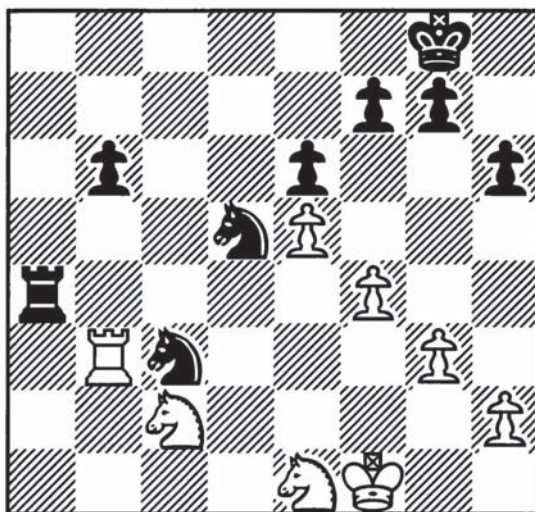
*Joel:* I would play 29...♟ac3.

*Boris:* Correct.

**29...♟xb2**

Of course not 29...♖xb2?? 30 ♖xa4 and White wins a piece.

**30 ♖d4 ♟a4 31 f4 ♟ac3 32 ♖b3 ♖8a4! 33 ♖xa4 ♖xa4 34 g3**





**Exercise:** What is the most consistent way to continue? (difficulty level 2)

Joel: Hmmm...

Boris: What moves are you considering?

Joel: I'm looking at 34...♖a2, 34...♗e4, and 34...♗c4.

Boris: When all of your pieces are well placed, how do you proceed?

Joel: With pawns.

Boris: Right, so what comes to mind?

Joel: I like 34...h5.

Boris: The right move is 34...g5!. After this, White's construction in the center is collapsing and he will inevitably lose a second pawn.

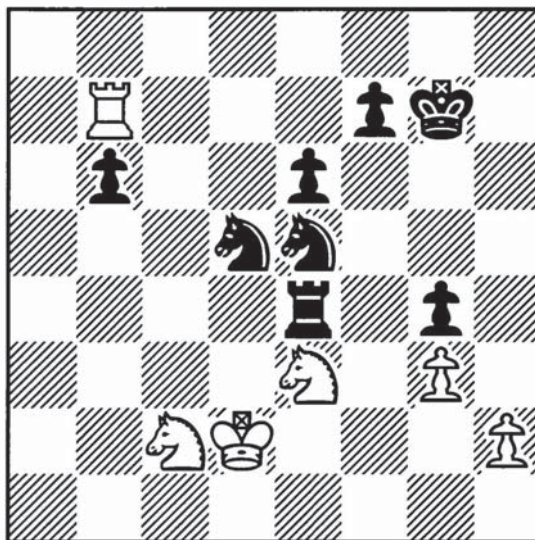
**34...g5! 35 fxg5 hxg5 36 ♖f3 ♗e4! 37 ♔e2 ♖c5 38 ♗a3 ♗e4+**

Winning the second pawn.

**39 ♔d2 g4 40 ♗h4 ♗xe5 41 ♗g2 ♗e4 42 ♗a8+ ♔g7 43 ♗b8 ♗b3+ 44 ♔d3**

Destroying my hope of 44 ♔d1? ♖c3 mate.

**44...♖c5+ 45 ♔d2 ♗d7 46 ♗b7 ♗e5 47 ♗ge3**



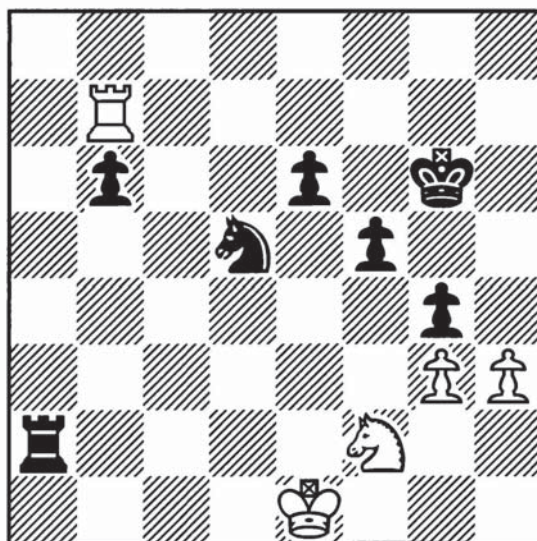
**Exercise:** Find the most precise move. (difficulty level 2)

Boris: It is important for Black to save the knight on d5, which protects b6, so...

Joel: 47...♖c4+.

Boris: Correct.

**47...♖c4+! 48 ♗xc4 ♗xc4 49 ♔d3 ♗c3+ 50 ♔d2 ♗c7 51 ♗b8 ♗c4 52 ♗b7 ♔g6 53 ♗e1 ♗a4 54 ♗d3 ♗a2+ 55 ♔e1 f6 56 ♗f2 f5 57 h3 ♗a1+ 58 ♔e2 ♗a2+ 59 ♔e1**



**Exercise:** What is the most accurate continuation? (difficulty level 2)

*Joel:* Can I play 59...gxh3 60 ♖xh3 ♔h5 - ? I guess White could play 61 ♖f2, so I need to find another way.

*Boris:* That's right. Note as well that, after 59...gxh3? 60 ♖xh3 ♜g2? 61 ♜xb6!, White obtains drawing chances. Clearly, Black has a winning position, but you need to be careful to the end, and Black has a way to win immediately...

**59...f4! 60 ♖xg4 fxg3 61 ♖e5+ ♔f5 62 ♖f3 ♔e4 0-1**

Paradoxically, White lost because he fulfilled his plan of bringing his knight to d6. *One well-placed piece does not a good position make.* It was also interesting to note how Black coordinated his knights in the endgame with four knights on the board.

In 1994, I played in the Candidates cycle (among eight players in the world) to see who would challenge Kasparov for the crown. For my match with Nigel Short, I prepared a new opening for me, the Caro-Kann, which I used in the following game. This game was important in terms of Caro-Kann theory in those days, and the pawn structure that arises is similar to the one we've been dealing with in the previous two games.

*Joel:* The Caro-Kann is very solid and doesn't seem in keeping with your style. Can you explain your decision to play it?

*Boris:* As Botvinnik wrote, the Caro-Kann is ideal for matches because it is important not to lose with Black.

Game 17  
**A.Yermolinsky-B.Gulko**  
 US Championship, Key West 1994  
*Caro-Kann Defense*

**1 e4 c6 2 d4 d5 3 e5 ♟f5 4 ♞f3 e6 5 ♟e2 c5 6 0-0 ♞e7!**

Short had great success with this system against the Caro-Kann. In many of his games, Black played 6...♞c6 7 c3 ♞ge7, when Black had difficulties completing his development because the knight on e7 interferes with the bishop on f8. For the match, I prepared a different set-up. My idea after 7 c3 was to play 7...♞ec6!, followed by ...♞d7 and ...♟e7, when Black's knights occupy reasonable squares.

**7 c4**

The move in the game creates a more tense position. Black lost a tempo playing ...c7-c6-c5, so White tries to exploit it by opening the position.

**7...♞bc6 8 ♞c3**

For a long time, Razuvaev (my second for the match with Short) and I could not find a good way forward for Black here, until we came upon his next move. For Black, it is very important to cover the b5-square.

In the two decades since then the variation with 8 ♞a3! was developed and is now considered the most dangerous for Black. The idea behind this move is that, after 8...a6, White has 9 dxc5 – which is impossible with the knight on c3 because Black would have ...d5-d4, hitting the knight, and then ...d4-d3, winning a piece.

**8...a6!**

Other ways are very unattractive for Black:

a) 8...cxd4? 9 ♞b5! ♞g6 10 cxd5 exd5 11 ♞fxd4 with a big advantage for White.

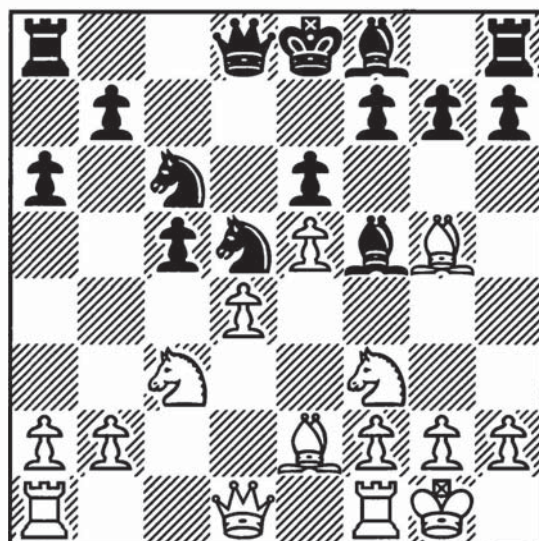
b) 8...♞g6 9 cxd5 exd5 10 ♞b3 with a strong initiative for White.

c) 8...dxc4 9 dxc5 ♞d5 10 ♞d4 ♞xc3 11 bxc3 ♟xc5 12 ♞xf5 exf5 13 ♞c2! and White is better, A.Kosteniuk-A.Karpov, World Blitz Championship, Moscow 2009.

**9 cxd5 ♞xd5 10 ♟g5?!**

In my preparation for the match with Short, I considered the best line to be 10 ♞xd5 ♞xd5 11 ♟e3 cxd4 12 ♞xd4 ♞xd4 13 ♞xd4 (if 13 ♟xd4 then 13...♟e4! 14 f3 ♞d8! equalizes) 13...♞xd4 14 ♟xd4 ♟e4! (it is extremely important not to let White play 15 ♟f3 unopposed) 15 ♞ac1 ♟e7 16 ♟b6 (after 16 ♟f3 ♟xf3 17 gxf3 ♞d7, Black has time to play ...♞hc8 and ...♟e8) 16...0-0 17 ♟f3 ♟xf3 18 gxf3 ♞fc8 19 ♞fd1 ♟g5! 20 ♞xc8+ ♞xc8 21 ♞d7 ♟f4 with a level endgame.





**Exercise:** What would you play after 10...g5 - ? (difficulty level 3)

*Joel:* I think I would go for 10...f6.

*Boris:* What do you think is Black's main problem in this position?

*Joel:* Well, I'm worried about my center. If, for example, I played something like 10...♖b6, which seems natural enough, White could take on d5 and my center seems to fall apart pretty quickly, and that would be very dangerous since Black is behind in development.

*Boris:* Right; the main problem for Black is that he is behind in development, so playing a move like 10...f6 is wrong in principle. You are right, though, that Black's center is under attack and that he needs to complete his development, so his next move is very important.

**10...♘xc3!**

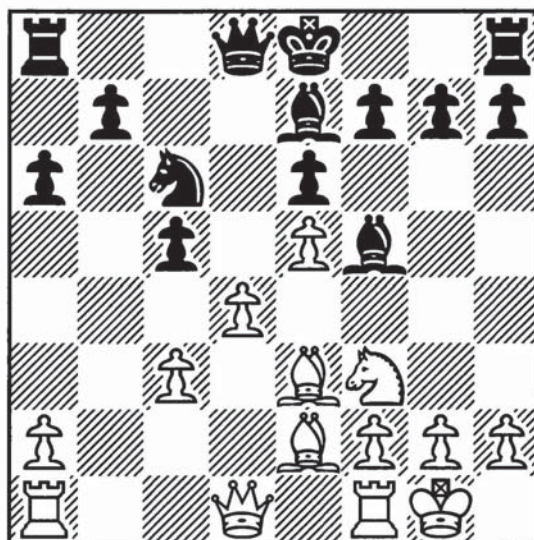
Blocking with the bishop would have been much worse: 10...♗e7 11 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 12 ♘xd5 exd5 13 dxc5, when White has the advantage.

*Joel:* That is exactly what I was worried about.

*Boris:* Right; that's why the game continuation is so important. Black has to avoid creating weaknesses in the center.

**11 bxc3 ♗e7 12 ♗e3**

Now after 12 ♗xe7 ♕xe7 13 d5 exd5 14 ♕xd5 O-O, Black has a good game.



**Exercise:** Does Black have to exchange on d4? (difficulty level 2)

**Joel:** I don't think so. I'm not afraid of 13 dxc5 because Black could play ...♔a5 and bring his rooks to the open files, when White's pawns will be very weak.

**Boris:** Your intuition is correct, but the reason to avoid 12...cxd4 is because, after 13 ♖xd4! ♗xd4 14 cxd4 ♙e4 15 ♙f3, Black still hasn't finished his development and he has to defend his queenside. It is therefore better to sacrifice the c5-pawn and complete development.

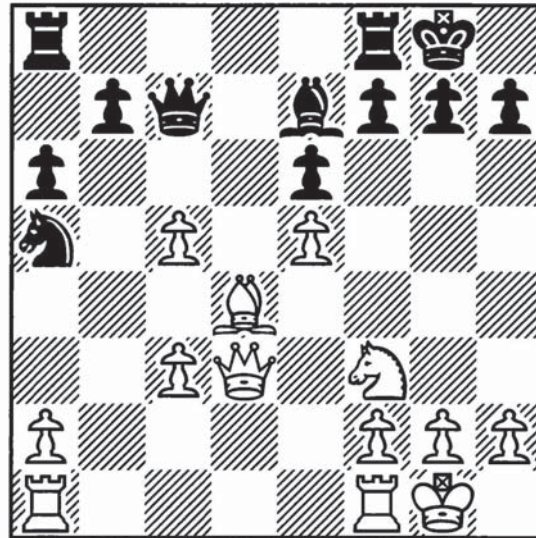
**12...0-0! 13 dxc5**

White has to take if he wants to fight for the advantage. Now Black has to defend against two threats: 1) White ganging up on the backward b-pawn; and 2) the knight coming to d6 via d2 and c4.

**13...♔c7 14 ♙d4 ♘a5!**

Black prevents White from pressuring him down the b-file. In the case of 14...♗fd8?! 15 ♗b3, the b7-pawn can become weak.

**15 ♙d3 ♙xd3 16 ♗xd3**



**Exercise:** What would you play here? (difficulty level 3)

*Joel:* I don't like the immediate 16...♙xc5 because White has 17 ♘g5, forcing 17...g6 18 ♖h3 h5 19 g4 with a serious attack. The bishop on e7 protects the g5-square and White's dark-square bishop is a big pawn right now. So I guess I'd opt for bringing my rooks to the c- and d-files. I'm not sure which one first but 16...♖ac8 seems reasonable.

*Boris:* You're right about 16...♙xc5 because of the variation you offered. If Black prepares to take the pawn on c5 by playing 16...h6?! (preventing ♘g5), White has time to reroute the knight: 17 ♘d2 ♙xc5 18 ♘e4 ♙xd4 (or 18...♙e7 19 ♖g3 with chances to attack on the kingside) 19 cxd4 and White reaches his goal of bringing his knight to d6. The move you offered, 16...♖ac8, also permits the rerouting of the knight via d2 and e4 to d6. Black has to prevent this maneuver, so the right move is 16...♖fd8!.

**16...♖fd8! 17 ♖fd1?!**

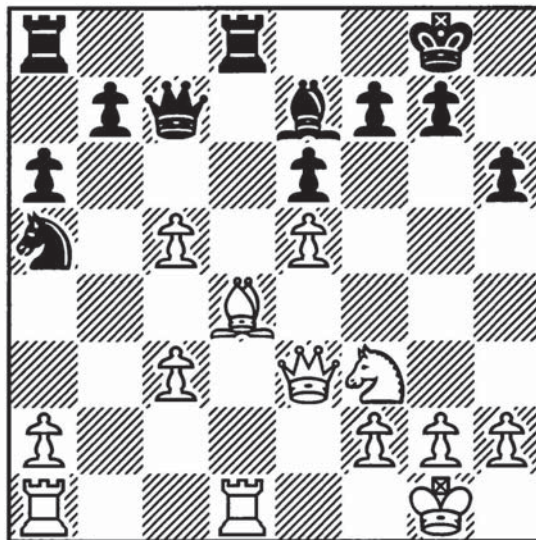
This aimless move in a tense position passes the initiative to Black. Stronger was 17 ♖fe1 h6 18 ♖e4 (now 18 ♘d2 ♘c6 19 ♘e4 is harmless after 19...♙xe5!, but not 19...♘xe5? 20 ♖g3 and White has a big advantage) 18...♙xc5 19 ♖g4 with chances of a kingside attack.

Let's discuss this pawn structure with a white pawn on e5 and a black pawn on e6 with an open or semi-open d-file. People began to understand this position much more after the candidates match between Wolfgang Uhlmann and Bent Larsen (Las Palmas 1971). The pawn structure under consideration arose in that match from the Meran Variation of the Semi-Slav, but strategic ideas in chess transfer easily from one variation to another. White's chances in such positions are connected with either a kingside attack with the rook on g4 (as in this game) or bringing a knight to f6 (as Vasiukov attempted in the previous game). Black's counterplay is on the d-file and against the e5-pawn, which can be under-protected.



**17...h6 18 ♖e3**

White can't play 18 ♘d2? immediately on account of 18...♙xe5.



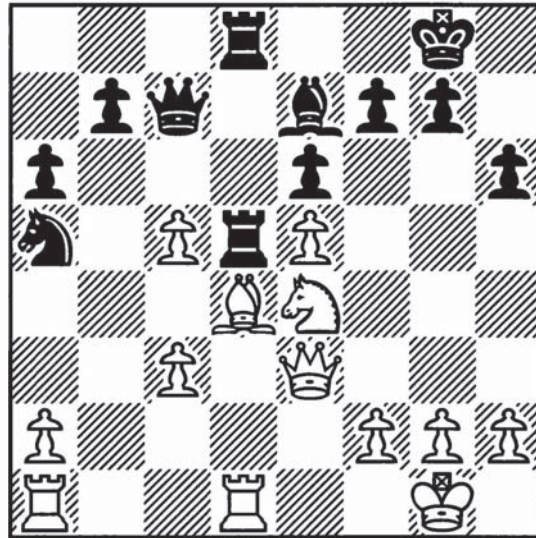
**Exercise:** What should Black play? (difficulty level 5)

*Joel:* I'm looking at 18...♘c4, but after 19 ♙e2 it looks like the knight just has to go back again. Maybe there is a tactical way to get the knight in the game with 18...♙xc5 19 ♙xc5 ♘c4.

*Boris:* What would you do after 20 ♙xd8+ ♙xd8 21 ♙d6 - ? It seems you are just a piece down. White's plan in this position, which you did not take into consideration, is still to reroute his knight to d6 via d2 and e4. For example, 18...♘c6 19 ♘d2 or 18...♙ac8 19 ♘d2 ♙xc5 20 ♘e4 ♙e7 21 f4 and White accomplishes his goal. Black needs to figure out how to prevent this maneuver, which the game continuation achieves.

**18...♙d5! 19 ♘d2 ♙ad8 20 ♙g3**

If White plays 20 ♘e4 now:



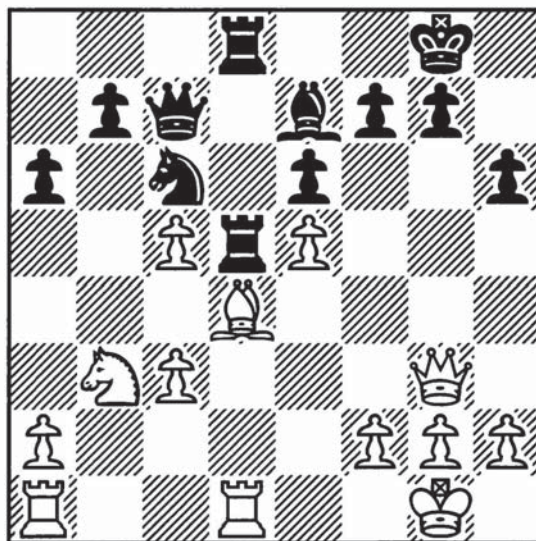
**Exercise:** What did Black have in mind? (difficulty level 1)

Joel: 20...♙xe5!.

Boris: Correct. This was the point of 18...♗d5, preventing the white knight from reaching the e4-square. 20...♘c4 21 ♙g3 ♙xe5? would be a mistake in view of 22 f4 and White is winning.

20...♘c6 21 ♘b3

Now 21 ♘e4 ♙xe5 works because, after 22 f4, Black has the intermediate move 22...♘xd4, winning. Black will have an extra pawn and a much better position.



**Exercise:** Black has two attractive plans – which one is better? (difficulty level 4)

*Joel:* I don't see two plans. The only thing I could come up with is 21...♙f8 and 22...♘e7.

*Boris:* Black has a chance to obtain a decisive advantage. One is 21...♚xe5!, as I played in the game; the other is 21...♙xc5! 22 ♘xc5 ♘xd4 23 cxd4 ♚xc5 and Black will win the d4-pawn. The reason I rejected this line is that I was afraid of technical difficulties, playing a rook endgame with an extra pawn. I wanted to keep the position more complicated, hoping for additional inaccuracies from my opponent.

Note that 21...♘xe5 would have been much weaker, since 22 ♖e1 ♙f6 23 ♖e4 reaches an unclear position.

**21...♚xe5! 22 ♚xe5?!**

22 f4 ♘xd4 23 cxd4 ♚c7 would have been hopeless for White, but the position reached in the game was even worse.

**22...♘xe5 23 ♙f1 ♘c4 24 ♙e2 e5 25 ♙e3 f5 26 ♖xd5 ♖xd5 27 f3?**

Yermolinsky hoped to build a fortress in the endgame with knight against bishop, but Black finds a way to break through with a series of zugzwangs. 27 ♖b1 was more stubborn, though Black has to win here too.

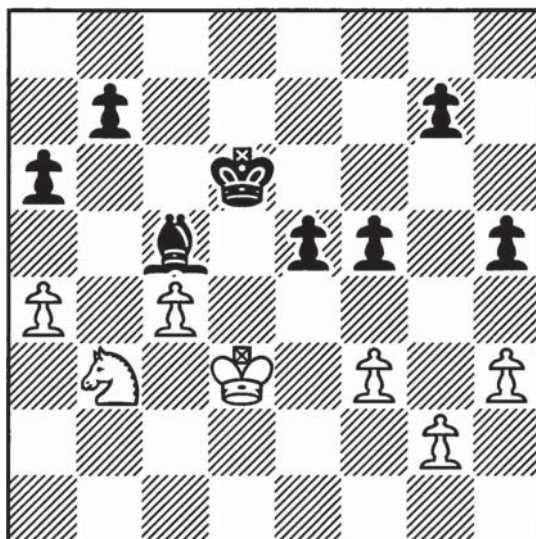
**27...♘xe3 28 ♙xe3 ♙xc5+ 29 ♙e2?!**

The rook endgame after 29 ♘xc5 ♖xc5 30 ♙d3 ♖d5+, while still bad for White, offered White a few more chances.

**29...♙e7 30 c4 ♖d7 31 ♖d1?!**

My opponent overestimated his prospects of drawing in a knight versus bishop endgame, but his chances after 31 ♖b1 ♙b4!? were hardly better.

**31...♖xd1 32 ♙xd1 ♙f7 33 ♙e2 ♙e6 34 ♙d3 h5 35 a4 ♙b4 36 ♘c1 ♙d6 37 ♘b3 ♙c5 38 h3**



**Exercise:** What is Black's winning plan? (difficulty level 3)

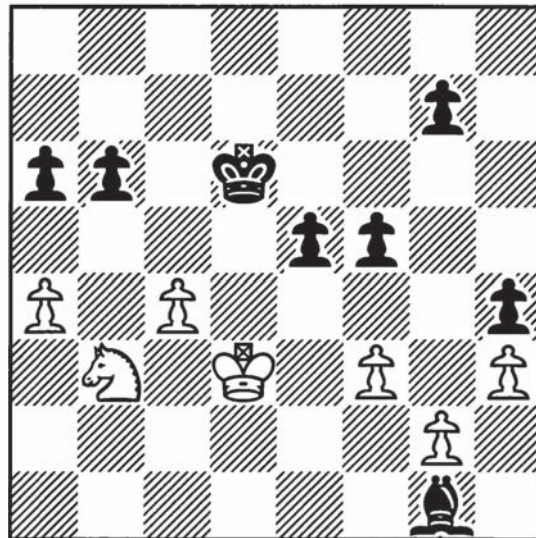
*Joel:* To create a passed pawn because you have an extra one in the center. Capablanca said to push the pawn that is unopposed, but I can't do that here, so I need to figure out a



way to make that happen.

**Boris:** This position demonstrates that *all rules are relative* – including Capablanca’s rule of pushing the unopposed pawn. Here it’s not attractive to try and create a passed pawn. My opponent hopes to build a fortress by keeping his pawns on light squares, his king on d3, and his knight on b3. I was able to penetrate, however, by creating a series of positions which put him in zugzwang. *Creating zugzwang positions is a common method in bishop versus knight endgames.*

**38...h4! 39 ♖a5 b6 40 ♖b3 ♙f2 41 ♙e2 ♙g1 42 ♙d3**



**Exercise:** How to place White in zugzwang? (difficulty level 2)

**42...a5!**

This is the first zugzwang position. White has to allow Black to push his e-pawn.

**43 ♙e2**

After 43 ♙c3, Black’s king will enter the white camp via the e5-square after 43...e4, while if 43 ♖d2, the king penetrates on the other side with 43...♙c5 44 ♙c3 ♙d4+ 45 ♙b3 ♙e3 and Black is winning.

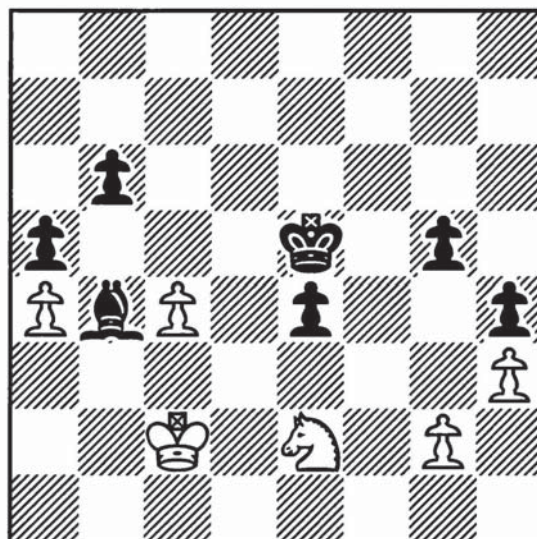
**43...e4! 44 fxe4 fxe4 45 ♙d2 ♙e5 46 ♖c1 ♙c5 47 ♖e2**

White has built a new fortress, which can be destroyed by creating a second zugzwang position.

**47...♙e7! 48 ♙c3**

Other tries didn’t promise a defense either. Black wins in all cases; for example, 48 ♙c2 ♙b4 49 ♙c1 e3 50 ♙b2 ♙e4 51 ♙c2 g5 etc; or 48 ♙e3 ♙g5+ 49 ♙f2 ♙d2 50 g3 (or 50 ♙f1 e3) 50...hxg3+ 51 ♙xg3 ♙d6 and so on.

**48...♙b4+ 49 ♙c2 g5!**



The second zugzwang position. Again you see that all rules are relative. Here, in order to create zugzwang, I had to push all my pawns onto the same color squares as my bishop. This goes against the general rule of placing pawns on squares *opposite* to the bishop, in order not to restrict its freedom.

**50 ♖d1 e3 51 ♖c1! ♖e4 52 ♖c2 ♙d2 0-1**

White resigned in this third and final zugzwang position because he has to allow Black's king access to either d3 or d4. For example, 53 ♜g1 ♖d4 54 ♜f3+ ♖xc4 55 ♜xg5 ♙b4 and the e-pawn is unstoppable.

The central question the next game addresses is whether center pawns are more important than flank pawns.

*Joel:* The answer, of course, is that center pawns are more important.

*Boris:* Well, as you will see, the answer is actually that it depends. As with most things in chess, rules are relative.

*Game 18*  
**B.Gulko-I.Rogers**  
Biel Interzonal 1993  
*Benoni Defense*

**1 d4 ♜f6 2 ♜f3 c5 3 d5 b5**

An attempt to take space on the queenside. Keres played this variation several times. The drawback is that Black's pawn structure on the queenside can become vulnerable. 3...g6 is another way.

**4 ♙g5 ♜e4 5 ♙f4 ♙b7!? 6 ♚d3!?**

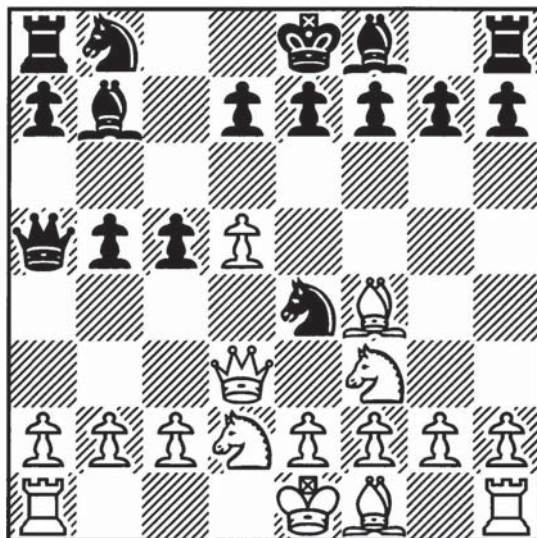
When I played this move in this generally rare variation, it was a novelty. By attacking

e4 and b5, White tries to create a strong pawn center.

6... ♖a5+

A different kind of position would arise after 6...f5 7 ♘c3!?

7 ♘bd2



7... ♘f6!?

Black permits his opponent to take up a strong position in the center. White would be better after 7... ♘xd2!? 8 ♙xd2 ♖b6 9 e4; while in the case of 7...f5!?, I hoped for 8 c3 ♘f6? (better was 8...e6!? 9 ♘xe4 fxe4 10 ♖xe4 ♙xd5 11 ♖c2, as in J.Fedorowicz-T.Abrahamyan, US Championship, San Diego 2006; or 8...c4 9 ♖d4 ♘f6 with unclear consequences in both cases) 9 ♖xf5 ♙xd5 (or 9... ♘xd5 10 ♙xb8 ♖xb8 11 ♖h5+ g6 12 ♖e5, winning one of Black's rooks) 10 e4 e6 11 ♖g5 ♘xe4 12 ♖h5+ g6 13 ♖e5 ♘xd2 14 ♙xd2 ♖g8 15 c4, winning the bishop.

8 e4 c4 9 ♖e3 g6

Here 9...e6!? 10 ♙e2 ♘a6 was preferable; but not 10... ♙e7?! 11 0-0 exd5 12 ♘d4!, when Black is under attack with White's knight heading for f5.

10 ♙e2!

*Joel:* Why do you give this an exclamation mark? Where else can the bishop go? You have to develop your kingside and get castled, no?

*Boris:* Well, White could attempt to destroy Black's queenside immediately with 10 c3!? ♙g7 11 a4; for example, 11... ♘a6! (Black doesn't have time for 11...0-0 due to 12 ♖c5 with advantage) 12 ♖a3 ♘g4 13 ♖e2 ♘b4!? 14 cxb4 ♖xb4 15 ♖a2 ♙xb2 16 axb5 c3 and Black regains his sacrificed knight.

Another option was 13... ♘c5 14 ♖d1 b4! with interesting opportunities for Black.

*Joel:* What opportunities? Can't White take on c4, attacking the queen?

*Boris:* After 15 ♘xc4 ♖d8 16 cxb4 ♘xe4, the f2-pawn is hanging and Black's position is very active.

Instead of 12 ♖a3, it would be better for White to turn his attention from the queenside



and play 12 ♖d4, and if 12...♗g4 13 ♜h3 ♕xd4 14 ♜xg4 ♕g7 then 15 d6! with good attacking chances.

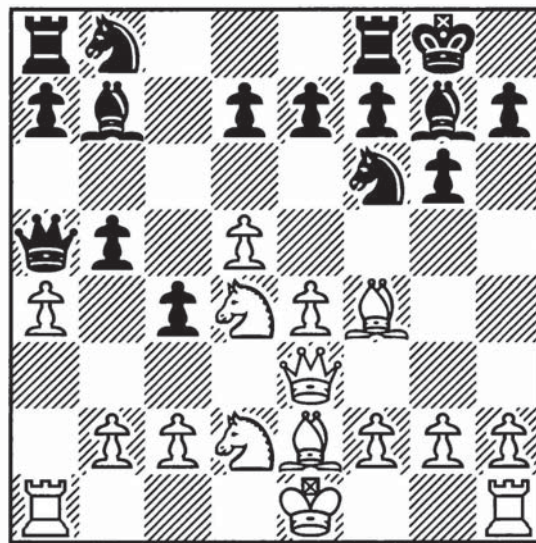
**10...♕g7 11 ♖d4!**

White doesn't have time to castle either, since 11 0-0 ♗g4 12 ♜c5 ♖a6 13 ♖xc4 ♜a4 gives Black a good game.

**11...0-0!?**

Black permits my next move, hoping for a tactical response. In the case of 11...♜b6 12 c3 0-0 13 a4 a6 (after 13...♕xd5 14 ♖xb5, Black would be in big trouble) 14 axb5 axb5 15 ♜xa8 ♕xa8 16 ♖c6! ♜xe3 17 ♖xe7+ ♗h8 18 fxe3, White has a big advantage.

**12 a4**



**Exercise:** Black's queenside is collapsing.  
What did Rogers have prepared? (difficulty level 4)

**Joel:** I think I would play 12...e6, trying to destroy White's center, when the king and queen may be exposed. *An attack on the flank should be countered by an attack in the center.*

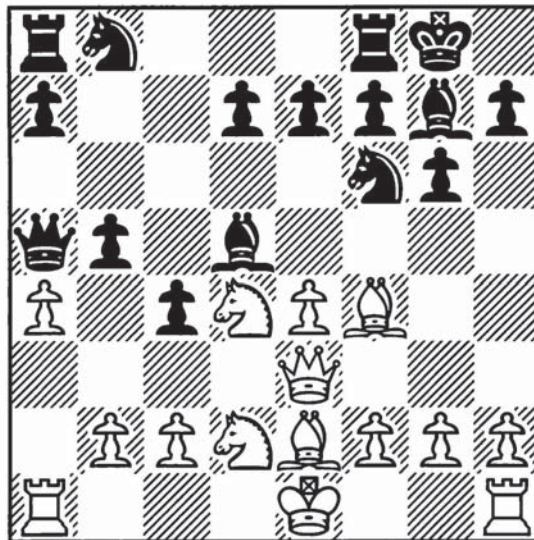
**Boris:** Unfortunately that rule doesn't work here.

**Joel:** The rules never work!

**Boris:** As my friend Razuvaev told me: *"We learn to play chess wrongly."* Computer-playing programs seem to be proving this to be the case, since the majority of rules we follow don't seem to work. *It is wiser, therefore, to find the best move and then decide what rule applies.*

In this particular case, your idea to attack White's center with 12...e6 is too slow. Play will continue 13 0-0 exd5 14 axb5 ♜b6 15 e5 and the knight on b8 cannot join the game, leaving Black's position hopeless. Rogers executed the same idea (destroying White's center), but much more resolutely.

12...♗xd5!



**Exercise:** What does White have to do? (difficulty level 4)

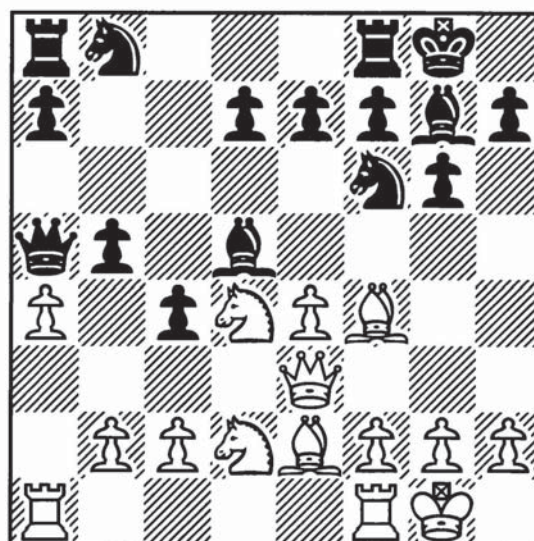
*Joel:* What's wrong with taking the piece?

*Boris:* Accepting Black's sacrifice leads to a wild position: 13 exd5?! ♖xd5 14 ♜e4 ♗xf4 15 ♜xf4 e5 16 ♜e4 exd4 17 ♜xa8 d3 18 cxd3 ♗xb2 and Black has great attacking chances for his sacrificed rook.

*Joel:* That's unbelievable. *Rybka* says that Black is better (-0.46), but you're a rook up.

*Boris:* Black has great attacking prospects. At the time of the game, I had to evaluate this without a computer. You have to stop at some point and estimate the position, and here I felt that Black had the better chances.

**13 0-0!**



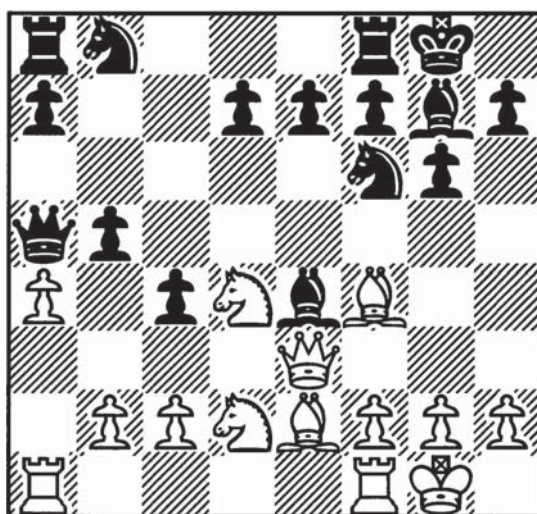


**Exercise:** What should Black play? (difficulty level 4)

*Joel:* I would play 13...♖xe4 14 ♖xe4 e5.

*Boris:* Again, you have the right idea but the wrong execution. In the variation you offer, White has 15 ♙xe5 ♙xe5 16 ♘c3, winning. Of course, Black hardly considered 13...♙b7, because White simply takes on b5 with the pawn and has a winning position (Black's queenside is ruined).

**13...♙xe4!**



**Exercise:** Should White take on e4? (difficulty level 3)

*Joel:* I would take. I considered the intermezzo 14 axb5, attacking the queen, but I think the queen is better placed on b6 because she attacks the knight on d4. For example, 14...♗b6 15 ♖xe4 ♖xe4 and the knight on d4 is hanging.

*Boris:* 14 ♖xe4?! is inaccurate because after 14...♖d5 15 ♗d2 ♗xd2 16 ♙xd2 ♙xd4, Black regains the piece. White can deviate in this line with 15 axb5! ♗f6 16 ♗f3 ♖xf4 17 ♗xf4 ♙xd4 18 ♙xc4 and is still much better. However, it is more practical to take on b5 straight away.

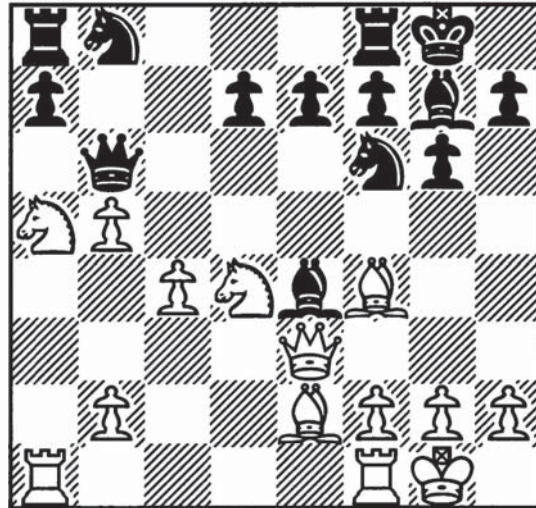
**14 axb5! ♗b6 15 ♖xc4**

Your 15 ♖xe4 would be met by 15...♖d5, transposing to the previous note. But not 15...♖xe4? due to 16 ♗xe4 ♗xd4 17 ♗xd4 ♙xd4 18 ♙f3 and the a8-rook drops off.

**15...♗b7 16 ♖a5 ♗b6 17 c4!**

This is the position White had to evaluate at the beginning of the complications. White's queenside pawns control important squares and restrict Black's pieces. Also, White's queenside pawns are mobile, whereas Black's central pawns are not. The main problem was that these complications took most of my allowable time and I was in severe time trouble (I had only 4 minutes left on the clock to make 13 moves!). Fortunately, White's strategic advantages in the position allowed me to play quickly.





The seemingly attractive 17 Qe5?!, threatening Qxf6, didn't promise much after 17...Re8! 18 Qxf6 exf6, since 19 f3 is met by Qh6!.

**17...Re8 18 Qdb3 d6?!**

Black could have made things more difficult by playing 18...e5!?, though after 19 Qg5 d5 20 c5 Qe6 21 Qxf6! Qxf6 22 c6, he has an unsolvable problem in that his knight on b8 is arrested, which in turn keeps the rook on a8 imprisoned. All the same, this position would have been more dynamic than the game continuation.

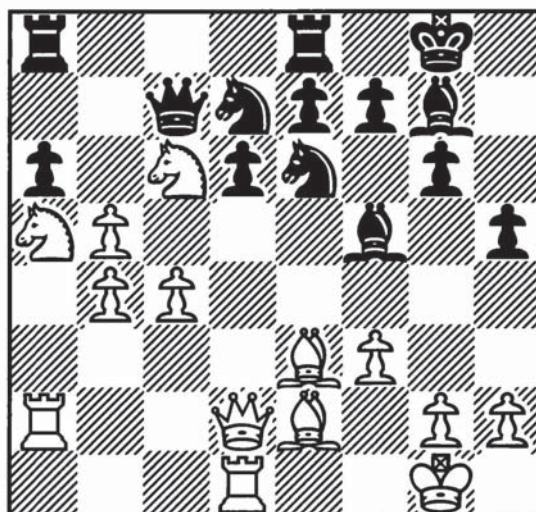
**19 Qd2! Qbd7 20 Qe3 Qc7 21 f3 Qf5 22 Qd4 Qc5?!**

Here 22...Qe5 was more stubborn, trying to fight for the crucial c6-square.

**23 b4 Qe6 24 Qdc6! h5 25 Ra2!**

I decided against sacrificing the exchange for the a7-pawn with 25 Qxa7 Qd7 26 Q7c6 Qxa1 27 Rxa1, since White's rooks are more valuable than the bishop on g7 which controls an empty diagonal.

**25...Qd7 26 Rd1 a6**



**Exercise:** Find a tactical solution for White. (difficulty level 3)

*Joel:* I keep trying to make 27 ♖xe7+ work, but it doesn't.

*Boris:* It doesn't work here, but after the move in the game, it does!

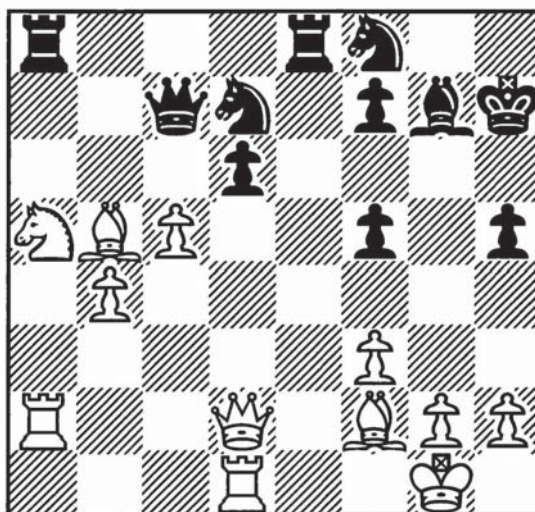
**27 c5!**

Attacking a6 and threatening b5-b6, as well as ♖xe7+.

**27...axb5 28 ♖xe7+ ♔h7**

Of course 28...♖xe7? loses to 29 cxd6.

**29 ♖xf5 gxf5 30 ♙xb5 ♖ef8 31 ♙f2?**



**Exercise:** What is the potential drawback of the safe and natural 31 ♙f2 - ? (difficulty level 4)

*Boris:* By playing safe I gave Black the opportunity for 31...dxc5!, intending 32 ♙xd7? (32 ♖c2! is still an easy win) 32...♙xd7 33 ♙xd7 ♖xd7 34 ♖xd7 cxb4 35 ♖xf7 b3 36 ♖a1 b2 37 ♖xg7+ ♔xg7 38 ♙d4+ ♔g6 39 ♙xb2 ♖e2 with reasonable chances for a draw, especially if Black's rook on a8 can reach the second rank as well.

Instead, 31 ♙f4! was better because it didn't allow my opponent any chances. Fortunately, he didn't play 31...dxc5 anyway, so the rest is easy.

**31...♖e6? 32 ♙d3 ♔g8 33 ♙xf5 ♖f6 34 cxd6 ♙b8 35 ♙e4 ♖e5 36 ♙xa8 ♙xa8 37 ♙d5 ♙e8 38 ♖e1 ♖e6 39 ♖ae2 ♖fg6 40 d7 1-0**

## Chapter Six

# The Mysterious Passed Pawn on the d-file

The topic here is connected to that of the previous chapter: the struggle in the center. A passed pawn on the d-file for White has a strange quality. When the pawn is on d4 and blockaded on d5, it doesn't promise White any advantage. On d5, the pawn often restricts White's pieces, closing files and diagonals. (This was shown in the famous 16th game of the Karpov-Kasparov 1985 World Championship match, which Karpov lost because he didn't jettison this pawn at the appropriate moment in order to free his pieces.) If the pawn reaches d6, however, it gives great energy to White's pieces.

*Joel:* My understanding of isolated queen's pawn positions is that, very often, pushing the pawn to d5 at the right moment, even if it is sacrificed, gives White an attack because it unleashes the latent potential behind the pawn. It seems you are saying something different.

*Boris:* You are talking about *isolated*, rather than *passed* queen pawn positions. In isolated queen's pawn positions, in which the d-pawn is *not* passed, its advance is often very powerful, because it attacks e6 and, as you say, uncovers a great deal of attacking potential behind it. The situation is different when White's isolated queen's pawn is passed. In that case, the pawn on d5 is restrictive.

Game 19  
B.Gulko-I.Gurevich  
Philadelphia 1991  
Grünfeld Defense

1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 g6 3 ♘c3 d5 4 ♘f3 ♙g7 5 ♚b3 dxc4 6 ♚xc4 O-O 7 e4 ♘a6 8 ♚a4

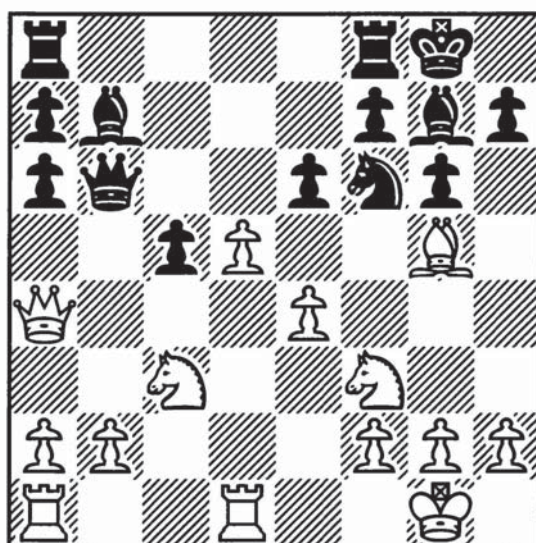


Not the usual move; theory at that time considered the position equal for Black, citing W.Uhlmann-L.Polugaevsky, Skopje 1968. I disagreed, though, and thought that the final estimation of the position from that game favored White, so I went in for this variation.

**8...c5 9 d5 ♖b6?!**

Black followed the theoretical recommendation in those years. During the game, I noticed that Black had a promising pawn sacrifice in 9...e6! 10 ♙xa6 bxa6 11 dxe6 ♙xe6 12 ♖xa6 ♖b6. After my game with Gurevich, which received some attention, this sacrifice was discovered and it gives Black excellent compensation.

**10 ♙xa6 bxa6 11 0-0 e6 12 ♖d1 ♙b7 13 ♙g5**



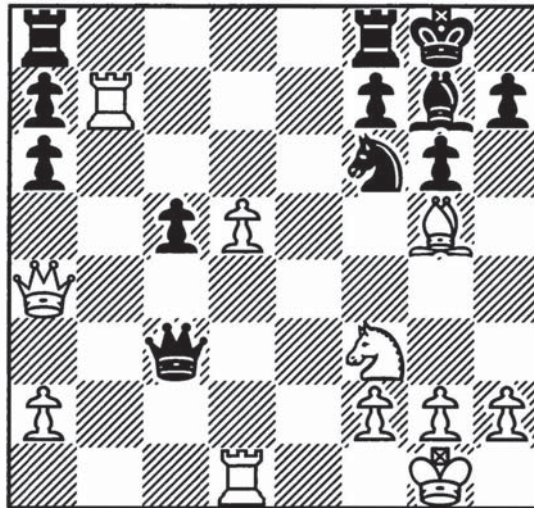
**13...exd5**

Here Gurevich deviated from Uhlmann-Polugaevsky, which continued 13...h6 14 ♙xf6 ♙xf6 15 ♖d2 ♖b4 16 ♖c2 ♖fe8 17 dxe6 (it is here that I thought White had an improvement in 17 ♖ad1!, when his pawn will reach the crucial d6-square) 17...♖xe6 and at this moment the players agreed on a draw.

**14 exd5 ♖xb2?!**

It seems that Black didn't like the look of 14...h6 15 ♙xf6 ♙xf6 16 ♖d2, when we reach a position similar to the one after my intended 17 ♖ad1 in the Uhlmann-Polugaevsky game. Instead, Gurevich goes in for complications.

**15 ♖ab1! ♖xc3 16 ♖xb7**



### 16...Rfb8

Black is already in great danger. He would lose material after 16...Rfd8? 17 d2 Qd3 18 a5, or 16...h6 17 d2 Qd3 18 exh6, while 16...Rfe8 17 d6 gives White a big advantage. The move played in the game is best.

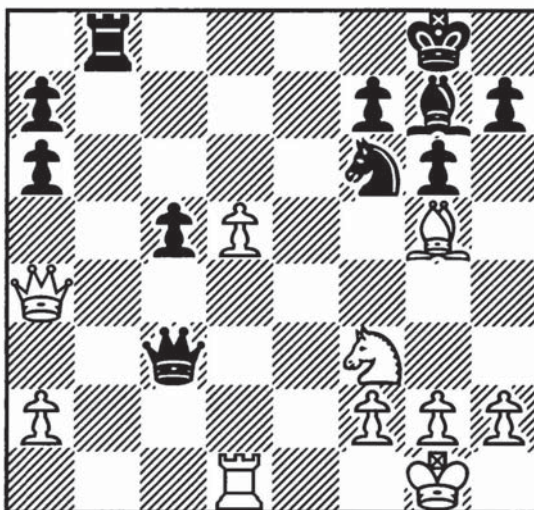
### 17 Rxb8+

White doesn't have anything better. In the case of 17 Qxa6 Qc2! 18 Rc1 Qf5 19 d6 Qd5, White's pieces lose their coordination; and 17 d2 doesn't work this time: 17...Qd3 18 f4 (18 Rxb8+? Rxb8 19 f4 Qb1 is even worse, and 18 Rxf7 Qb1 19 Re7 Qb5 20 Qxb5 Qxd1+ 21 Qf1 Rxf1+ 22 Qxf1 Qxd5 is good for Black too) 18...Qxd1+ 19 Qxd1 Rxb7 and the two rooks are stronger than White's queen.

*Joel:* How can you tell?

*Boris:* Black's rooks are well coordinated, they have open files, and White's d-pawn will be lost.

### 17...Rxb8

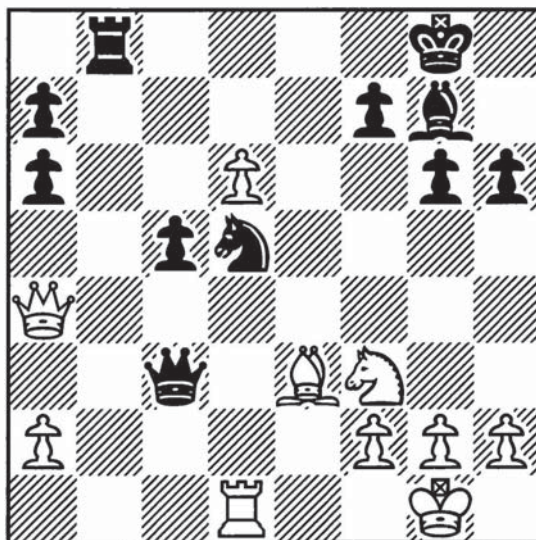


**Exercise:** What does White have to play? (difficulty level 2)

*Joel:* Well, given our conversation, d5-d6 looks good.

*Boris:* Correct. The d-pawn becomes more and more powerful the further it advances.

**18 d6! h6 19 ♖e3 ♘d5!?**



**Exercise:** What should White play here? (difficulty level 3)

*Joel:* I like 20 ♗d2, threatening d6-d7 and ♗a5. I looked at 20 ♖xd5 but didn't like the back rank counterplay Black gets.

*Boris:* The problem with 20 ♗d2 is that you close the d-file, reducing the power of your d-pawn. For example, after 20...♚b2 21 d7 ♘b6, Black has sufficient counterplay.

In the case of 20 ♖xd5 ♖b1+ 21 ♖d1 ♚a1 22 ♗e8+ ♔h7 23 ♖xb1 ♗xb1+ 24 ♗c1 ♗xc1+ 25 ♘e1 ♗c4 26 d7 ♗f6 27 d8♗ ♗xd8 28 ♗xd8 ♗xa2, Black's chances are not worse because it is difficult for White to stop the a-pawn.

The correct solution, therefore, is to push the d-pawn immediately.

**20 d7!**

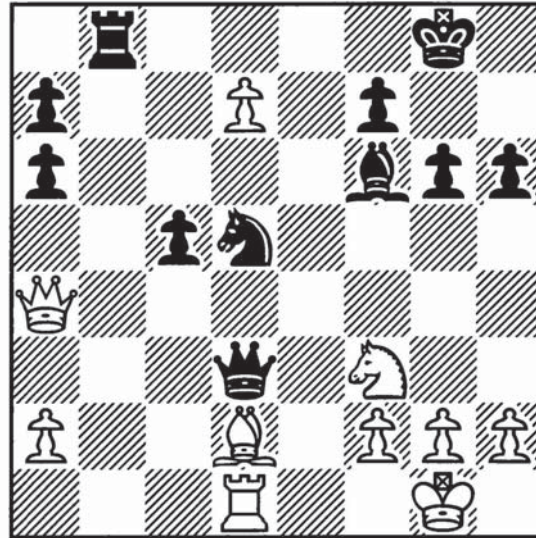
If the pawn is powerful on d6, its strength increases exponentially on d7.

**20...♗f6 21 ♗xh6**

The start of a complicated combination. Taking the knight would lead to a draw: 21 ♖xd5 ♖b1+ 22 ♖d1 ♚a1 and White doesn't have more than a perpetual with 23 d8♗+ ♗xd8 24 ♗e8+ ♔g7 25 ♗xh6+! ♔xh6 26 ♗f8+ ♔h7 27 ♗xf7+ ♔h6 etc.

However, your suggestion on the previous move is now very strong: 21 ♗d2! and if 21...♗d3? then:





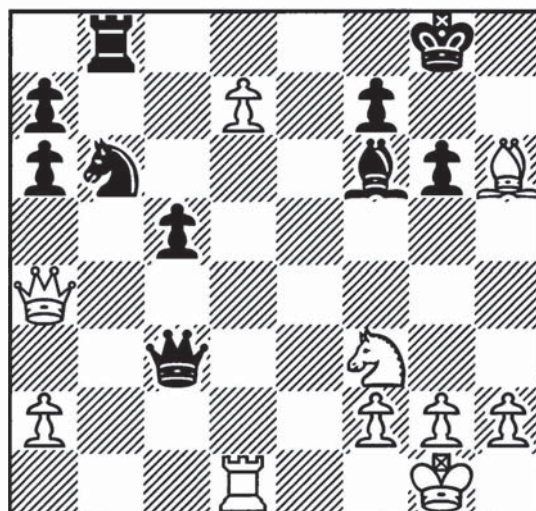
**Exercise:** What does White have to play? (difficulty level 3)

*Joel:* It seems that Black has ...Rb1 in all lines.

*Boris:* You're right. The solution to the problem, therefore, is to promote the pawn straight away: 22 d8♚+! ♟xd8? (but if 22...♜xd8 then 23 ♟a5 wins) 23 ♚e8+ ♟h7 (or 23...♟g7 24 ♟xh6+) 24 ♚xf7+ ♟h8 25 ♜e5, winning. The importance of this pawn is that, by its promotion, you destroy the coordination of Black's pieces.

If Black tries 21...♚b2 instead, then White continues 22 ♚e4 ♜c7 23 ♟f4, winning. Again, the major point is that the passed pawn on d7 disrupts Black's forces decisively.

**21...♜b6**

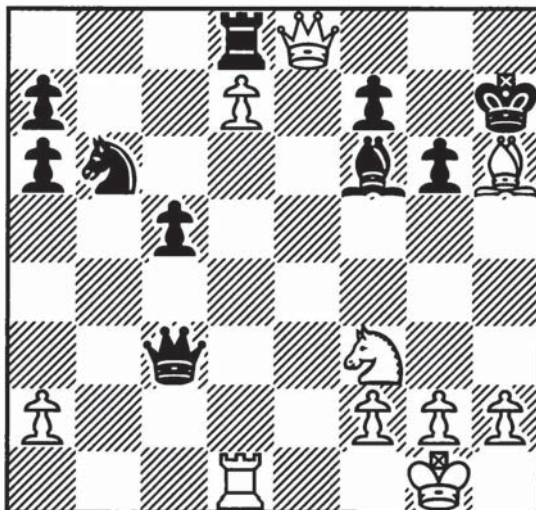


**Exercise:** Where does White's queen have to go? (difficulty level 3)

*Joel:* I like 22 ♕e4. The queen is centralized and threatens ♕e8+, which looks winning.

*Boris:* Correct. 22 ♕c6 would be inferior due to 22...♕c2! 23 ♖c1 ♕f5 24 ♗xc5 ♕xd7 and Black escapes from his problems.

**22 ♕e4! ♖d8 23 ♕e8+ ♔h7**



**Exercise:** Find a winning combination. (difficulty level 6)

*Joel:* 24 ♖g5+ ♔xh6 25 ♖xf7+ looks good.

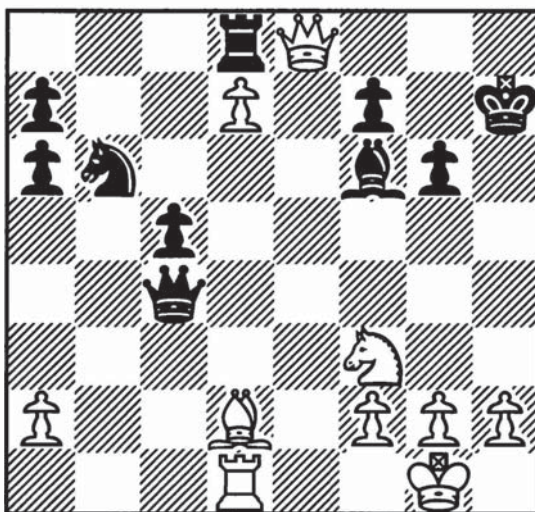
*Boris:* And what about 24...♗xg5 - ?

*Joel:* 25 ♗xg5 and White loses his d-pawn.

*Boris:* Right. The first move is very subtle but you offered it earlier.

**24 ♗d2! ♕c4**

Otherwise White will just take on f7 with check. Now Black has protected all of his weak squares, but his pieces are overloaded.



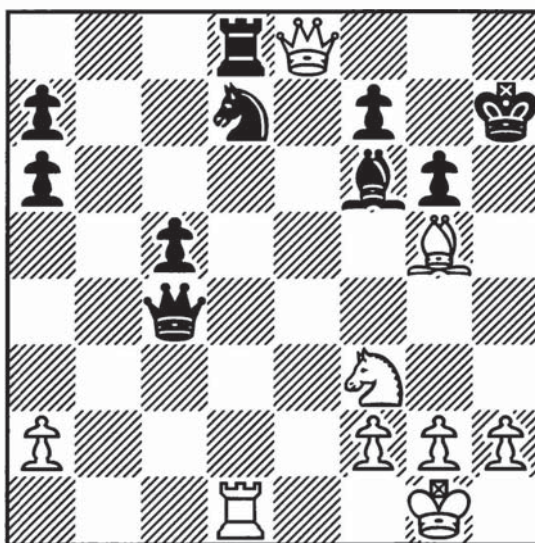


**Exercise:** How does White go about breaking Black's defense? (difficulty level 5)

**25 ♖g5!**

The attractive-looking 25 ♖g5+ leads to a drawish endgame after some interesting complications: 25...♗g7 26 ♜xf7 ♜c2! (26...♜xf7 is impossible due to 27 ♖h6+) 27 ♖h6+ (27 ♜f1 ♜xd7 28 ♜e5 ♜e7 29 ♖h6+! ♗h7! 30 ♜f8 ♜f5 is unclear) 27...♗h7 28 ♜c1 ♜xd7 29 ♜xd7 ♜xc1+ 30 ♖xc1 ♜xd7 31 ♜d6.

**25...♜xd7**



**Exercise:** What should White play now? (difficulty level 4)

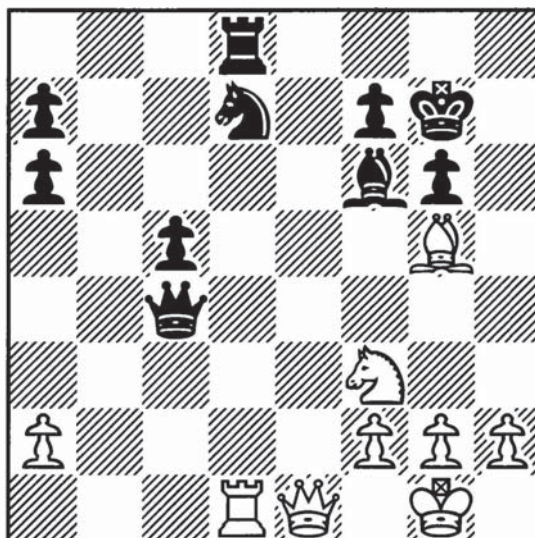
*Joel:* I don't see anything.

*Boris:* The decisive move is 26 ♜e1!! For the price of a pawn, White has removed all coordination between Black's pieces – a heroic career for the mysterious d-pawn. Now there is no defense.

**26 ♜e1!! ♜a4**

After 26...♖xg5 27 ♜xg5+ ♗g7 28 ♜e7, White wins easily; while 26...♗g7 is equally hopeless:



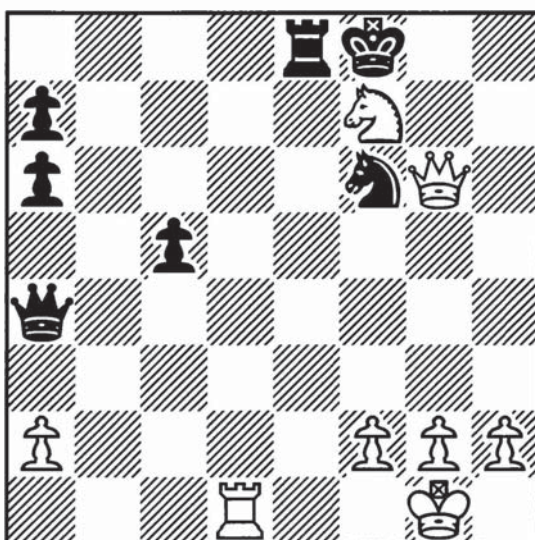


**Exercise:** Find a winning combination. (difficulty level 2)

*Joel:* It looks like 27 ♖xf6+ wins.

*Boris:* Correct! For example, 27...♔xf6 28 ♜xd7 ♜xd7 29 ♚e5 mate.

27 ♖xf6 ♜e8 28 ♜g5+ ♔h6 29 ♜xf7+ ♔h7 30 ♜g5+ ♔h6 31 ♜f7+ ♔h7 32 ♚d2! ♜xf6 33 ♚h6+ ♔g8 34 ♚xg6+ ♔f8



**Exercise:** Where should the white rook go? (difficulty level 3)

*Joel:* I guess I would play 35 ♜b1.

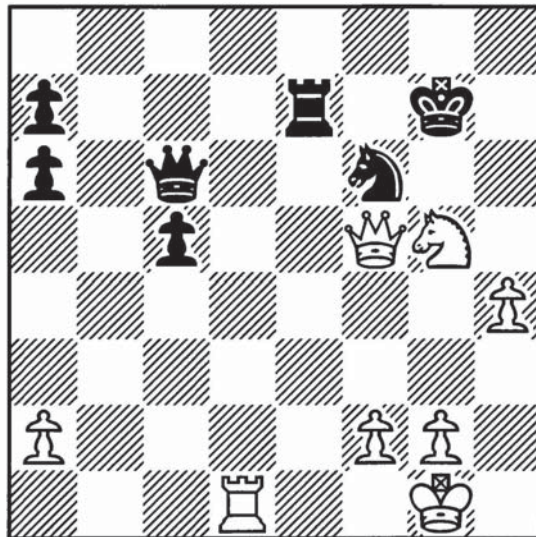
*Boris:* You have to be careful. Black's position is bad but if you transpose to an endgame, the struggle would start anew. For example, after 35 ♜b1, Black has 35...♚e4, forcing an

exchange of queens, and all of a sudden Black's passed c-pawn becomes strong. Or if you play 35 ♖c1, Black has the surprising 35... ♕c4!, winning a piece. The correct move, which eliminates any counterplay, is 35 ♖f1.

**35 ♖f1! ♕c6 36 ♘g5 ♖e7 37 ♖d1 ♖g7 38 ♕f5**

White could win material with 38 ♖d8+ ♖e7 39 ♖e8+! etc, but already he doesn't need such flashy moves.

**38... ♖e7 39 h4 ♖g7**



**Exercise:** What is the most precise move? (difficulty level 1)

*Joel:* I would play 40 h5.

*Boris:* Good, that is the most accurate, and Black now resigned.

**40 h5 1-0**

This game demonstrated how the passed d-pawn became stronger and stronger the further it advanced into the enemy camp, eventually sacrificing itself to destroy the coordination of Black's forces.

## Chapter Seven

# Piece Coordination

We started to discuss the topic of piece coordination in the previous game. Let's continue that discussion further.

The theme of the game below is the connection between maneuvering play, piece coordination, and the fight for the initiative. It was played in the first round of the 1994 US Championship, which I won ahead of Seirawan and Christiansen, who tied for second. One of the reasons for my good performance was my preparation, which I worked on for the candidates match against Nigel Short. One of the ideas I developed for that match was used in the following game.

### Game 20 B.Gulko-W.Browne US Championship, Key West 1994 *English Opening*

**1 c4 e5 2 ♖c3 ♘c6 3 ♗f3 f5 4 g3**

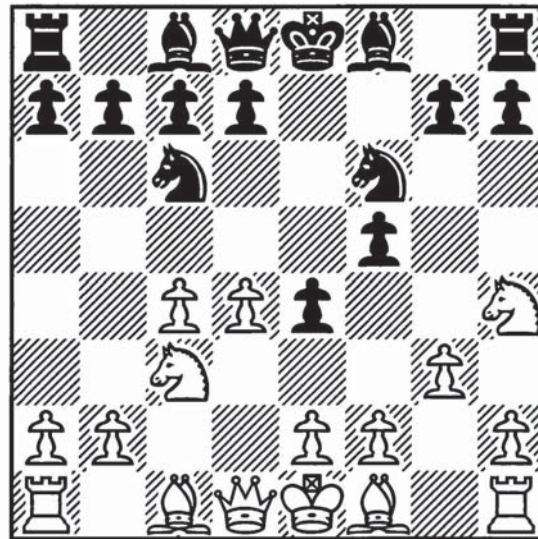
The usual theoretical line is 4 d4 e4 5 ♗g5, maneuvering the knight from g5 to h3 and f4.

**4...♗f6 5 d4**

Again, a well-known position could have arisen after 5 ♗g2.

**5...e4 6 ♗h4!**





This was the new idea I mentioned above, which I prepared for my match with Short. White forces Black to defend the f5-pawn. If the knight went to g5 instead, Black could develop his bishop to b4, reaching a hybrid Nimzo-Indian/English-type position.

**6...g6**

*Joel:* Isn't 6...d6 more natural?

*Boris:* Yes, it's possible, but then the a3-f8 diagonal is blocked, and the point of my play is to try and prevent the black bishop from going to b4. All the same, after 6...d6, we would ultimately reach a position similar to the game.

**7 ♖g5 ♖g7**

Black couldn't chase the white bishop with 7...h6 because, after 8 ♜xg6 hxg5 9 ♜xh8 ♖g7 10 ♜g6 d6 11 h4, White's knight would escape from behind enemy lines.

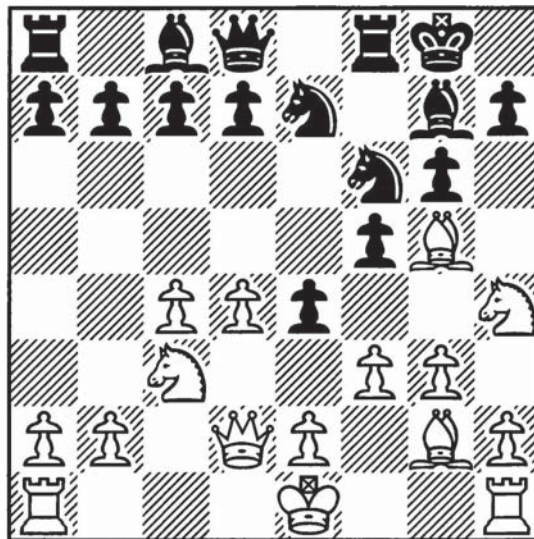
**8 ♜d2 0-0**

Here 8...h6 leads to a favorable endgame for White after 9 ♖xf6 ♜xf6 10 ♜d5 ♜d6 (10...♜xd4? 11 ♜xc7+ ♖d8 12 ♜xa8 ♜xb2 13 ♜c1 is just bad for Black) 11 ♜f4 (the position after 11 ♜xg6 ♜xg6 12 ♜xc7+ ♖d8 13 ♜xa8 b6 14 e3 ♖b7 15 ♜xb6 axb6 16 0-0-0 is not attractive for White, despite his material advantage, since his rooks don't have any open files) 11...♜xf4 12 gxf4 ♖f7 13 ♜xc7 ♜b8 14 e3.

**9 ♖g2**

The immediate 9 f3 doesn't promise White much after 9...exf3 10 exf3 ♜e8+ 11 ♖e2 d6 (11...♜h5 12 ♜b5 would be bad for Black) 12 0-0-0, because it would be difficult to find squares for the bishop on e2 and the knight on h4. Finding work for the minor pieces and coordinating their action is the essential idea in this game.

**9...♜e7 10 f3!**



White now has to hurry with this move. In the case of 10 0-0 d5, Black would have a good game.

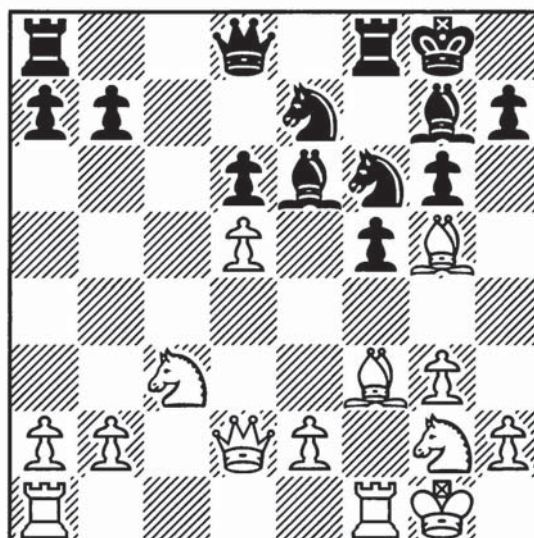
**10...exf3 11 ♖xf3 c6 12 ♘g2! d6**

Black couldn't take an active position in the center with 12...d5, because after 13 cxd5 cxd5 14 ♘f4, the d5-pawn is very weak. Here you can see the difference from 9 f3, which I rejected in the previous note. Here, the knight on f4 and bishop on f3 are excellent.

**13 0-0 ♗e6**

Black forces me to determine the position of the pawns in the center. 13...♗d7 was more flexible.

**14 d5! cxd5 15 cxd5**



**15...♗f7?**

This was the critical moment of the game. After this retreat, Black's pieces lose coordination. Browne probably hoped for counterplay against d5, but this is well defended, while

Black's pieces are crowded and poorly placed. Much better was 15...♗d7, when the bishop is alive rather than being imprisoned on the kingside. You can already see that this game is about the respective positions of the minor pieces.

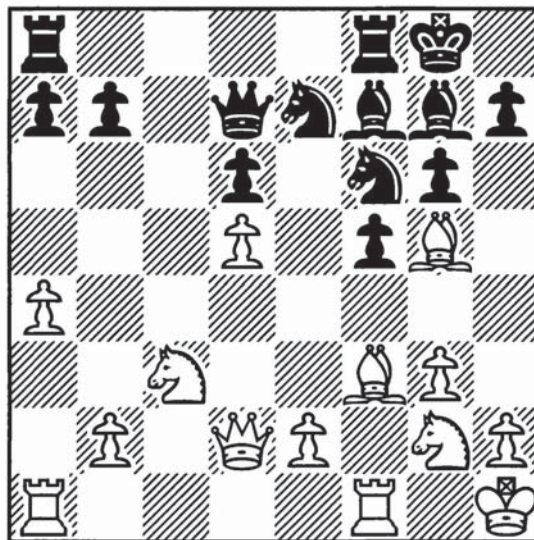
*Joel:* You once said that *the assessment of a position depends on the position of the minor pieces*.

*Boris:* Yes, and their prospects. Here, not only is the position of the bishop on f7 bad, but very importantly it cannot be improved because it is placed on the wrong diagonal.

**16 ♖h1! ♜d7 17 a4!**

Preventing counterplay with ...b7-b5.

**17...♞ae8**



**Exercise:** How can White maneuver his pieces so as to improve their coordination? (difficulty level 3)

*Joel:* I'm not sure.

*Boris:* Which piece is placed worst?

*Joel:* The knight on g2.

*Boris:* Correct. Where does it have to go?

*Joel:* I'd imagine f4.

*Boris:* Correct. So what would you play now?

*Joel:* 18 ♗e3.

*Boris:* Correct! Is that the final place for the bishop?

*Joel:* No, I'd like to move it to d4, though I have to see if it works tactically because of the d-pawn.

*Boris:* After your knight moves to f4, the d5-pawn will be protected.

**18 ♗e3! ♞c8 19 ♗d4 ♖h8**

Black's problems are not restricted to the bishop on f7. The queenside knight was bad

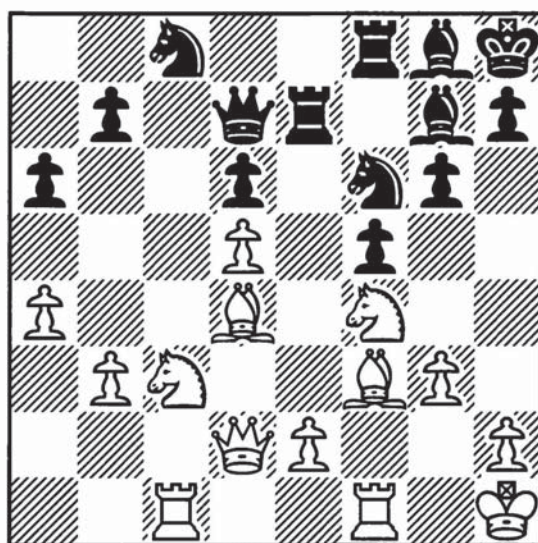


on e7 and now it is bad on c8. Black could solve his problems if he could transfer his knight to d7, so he had to try 19...♖b6 20 b3 ♜e7! (not 20...♜c7 21 a5 ♖bd7 22 ♖b5 and Black loses a pawn), when the knight will arrive on e5 in time; for example, 21 ♜ae1 ♖bd7 22 e4 fxe4 23 ♖xe4 ♖xe4 24 ♜xe4 ♖e5.

Instead, Browne overprotects his f6-knight by retreating the bishop to g8, but this doesn't solve all his troubles because now his king doesn't have any room to escape.

**20 ♖f4 ♜g8 21 b3 ♜e7 22 ♜ac1 a6**

Black has to cover the b5-square. After 22...♜fe8 23 ♖b5, White would infiltrate on the queenside down the c-file.



**Exercise:** White's pieces are ideally coordinated. Now is the time to take over the initiative. How can you do this? (difficulty level 5)

**Joel:** I know the general answer.

**Boris:** What is it?

**Joel:** With a pawn break.

**Boris:** Which one?

**Joel:** 23 e4 is screaming out to be played.

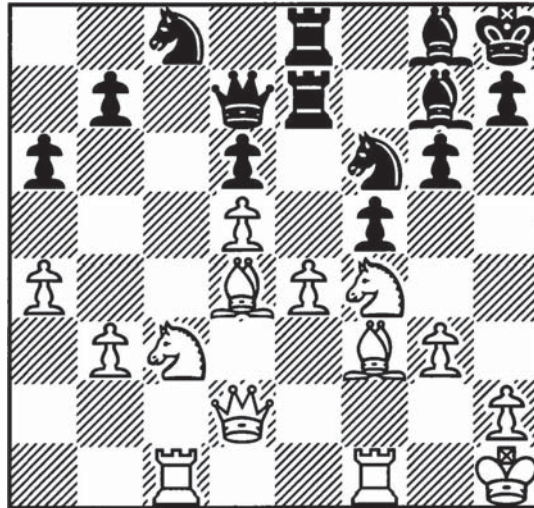
**Boris:** Excellent! Did you calculate variations?

**Joel:** No, so in all likelihood I wouldn't play it myself in a game.

**Boris:** It is interesting that you were able to solve the problem on intuition alone. Again, this shows both your strength and weakness as a chess player, because if you were able to calculate the consequences of your intuition, you would play 23 e4 in a game!

**23 e4! ♜fe8**

The main variation of White's combination is 23...fxe4 24 ♖xe4 ♖xe4 25 ♜xe4 ♜xe4 26 ♖xg6+ (here we see the usefulness of White's knight being on f4) 26...hxc6 27 ♜h6+ ♜h7 (now we see how Black's bishop on g8 suffocates his king) 28 ♜xf8 mate.



**Exercise:** How can White increase the pressure? (difficulty level 4)

*Joel:* I honestly don't know. I was looking at 24 ♖xf6 and 25 ♜xg6+, but neither works.

*Boris:* Right. White has to increase the energy of his pieces and the piece which is not working fully is the bishop on f3. On which square will it reach its full potential?

*Joel:* Obviously h3.

*Boris:* Correct. So the answer is 24 ♖g2.

**24 ♖g2! ♜g4**

Similar variations to White's main combinational idea follow after 24...fxe4 25 ♖h3 ♜d8 26 ♜xg6+ hxg6 27 ♜xf6!; for example, 27...♖h7 (or 27...♖xf6 28 ♖xf6+ ♜h7 29 ♜xe4 ♜b6 30 ♜g5+ ♜h6 31 ♜f7+ ♜h7 32 ♜h6 mate) 28 ♖e6 ♜f8 29 ♜cf1 ♜xf6 30 ♜xf6 ♜b6 31 ♜f4 ♜e8 32 ♜xe4 ♜d7 33 ♖xd7 ♜xe4 34 ♜f8+ ♖g8 35 ♜h6 mate.

**25 ♖h3**

Now that all of his pieces are included in the attack, White is destined to breakthrough no matter what.

**25...♖xd4**

No better was 25...♖e5 26 exf5 gxf5 (26...♜xf5 27 ♜d1 h5 28 ♜xh5 ♜f2+ 29 ♜xf2 ♜xh3 30 ♜f4 wins) 27 ♜h5 ♜f7 28 ♖xg4 fxg4 29 ♜f6 ♜xf6 30 ♜xf6 and White is winning.

**26 ♜xd4+ ♜g7**

If 26...♜e5 then 27 exf5 gxf5 28 ♜g2 (28 ♜e6 is even more resolute) 28...♜f8 29 ♜h4 wins. 27 exf5 gxf5 28 ♜h5 ♜e5 29 ♜xg7 ♜xg7 30 ♖xg4 fxg4 31 ♜ce1 ♜e7 32 ♜xe5 dxe5 33 ♜e4 h5 34 d6 ♜c6 1-0

In this desperate position, Black lost on time, but it was time to resign anyway.

The lesson from this game is the importance of the coordination of the minor pieces. Black's pieces lost theirs after the unfortunate retreat 15...♖f7. The white pieces, in contrast, became ideally coordinated between moves 18-20, though it was important that White chose the best plan on move 9. One further thing to take from this game is the rule: *When your pieces are ideally placed, looked for pawn breaks.*

## Chapter Eight

# Psychology in Chess

Here we will talk about the chess struggle and how to win the game. To win, we have to force our opponent to make a mistake. Experienced chess players know a lot of chess positions and know how to play with their pieces in these positions. So we need to create positions where we understand what to do and our opponent does not. Of course, this can create a situation where you don't know what to do either, but such is life. Therefore, in choosing your opening and strategy, you have to consider your opponent's tastes and style and what the drawbacks are of his proclivities. You need to create situations where his advantages become his disadvantages.

*Joel:* How do you do that when you are playing people as good as you?

*Boris:* First, stronger players have fewer drawbacks. But the style of one player may be conducive to creating positions where our drawbacks are minimized and their drawbacks are magnified. For example, I am often asked why I played so well against Kasparov. This is exactly a case where, because of his style, my drawbacks were not so significant and my strengths were able to excel.

*Joel:* What are your drawbacks then and what was Kasparov's style? Why were you able to excel against him exactly.

*Boris:* Well, I think my main drawback is that I am relatively weaker when I don't have the opportunity to play actively. Players like Petrosian and Karpov were very difficult for me, because they were great masters at preventing their opponents from generating dynamic possibilities. Kasparov, on the other hand, was the most dynamic chess player in history. So against him, my relative weakness as a chess player didn't matter as much – he was going to play dynamically and there my strengths are at their best. So when an experienced player prepares for a game or match, he has to realize the best and worst aspects of his opponent's style and also be able to do the same for himself; i.e. understand what your best and worst qualities are as a chess player.

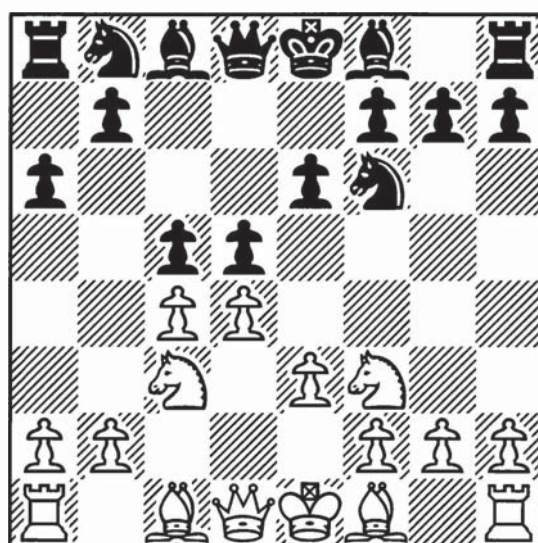


Game 21  
**B.Gulko-W.Browne**  
 US Championship, Denver 1998  
*Tarrasch Defense*

This is the second game in this volume against Walter Browne, six-time U.S. Champion. So we have already seen some of his strengths and weaknesses as a chess player. He knew his openings very well and carefully calculated variations, but it seems he had some difficulty assessing final positions when there were no clear criteria for an advantage. In other words, his relative weakness was being unable to rely on his intuition and feeling for a position to guide him in unclear situations. As a result, his pieces sometimes lost coordination (as in the previous game); or he would choose a clear continuation he was able to calculate, even though it was objectively worse than an unclear continuation that he couldn't calculate, and which required you to trust your intuition (as in this game).

**1 ♘f3 c5 2 c4 ♘f6 3 ♘c3 e6 4 e3 ♘c6**

A more sophisticated way to play this opening is 4...d5 5 d4 and now 5...a6! (rather than 5...♘c6, as in the game).



The point of ...a7-a6 is to: 1) remove the b5-square from White's light-squared bishop; 2) prepare the a7-square for Black's dark-squared bishop (if White takes on c5); and 3) prepare ...b7-b5 in two instances: i) if Black takes on c4 and White recaptures with his bishop; or ii) if White takes on d5, Black recaptures with his e-pawn and then follows up with ...c5-c4.

**5 d4 d5 6 cxd5 exd5**

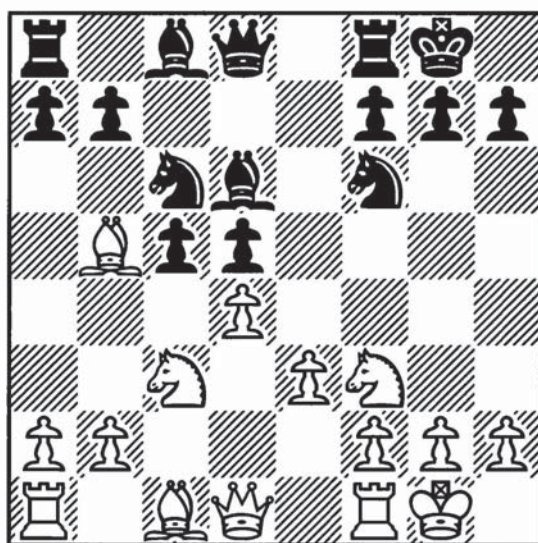
This is an interesting moment. Black has to decide whether to struggle against an isolated queen's pawn with 6...♘xd5, obtaining a position from the Semi-Tarrasch (Black will eventually take on d4 and White will recapture with his e-pawn) or to accept an isolated

pawn himself, as in the game. Since Browne is a very aggressive and dynamic player, he opts for the second possibility. As we've already noted, he is very experienced and knows how to play in typical positions where he can use his abilities to calculate variations. My task was to find a way to highlight the drawbacks in this approach. As a result, I decided to try a variation used successfully by Karpov, the greatest exponent of killing the dynamic potential in his opponent's position.

**7 ♖b5!? ♙d6**

Another important move is 7...a6, but in that case we wouldn't reach a typical IQP position, so it makes sense that Browne doesn't go for this line.

**8 0-0 0-0**



**9 h3!?**

*Joel:* Couldn't you play 9 dxc5!? here?

*Boris:* Yes, and then 9...♙xc5 10 b3 would reach a typical IQP position, but in that case Browne would know exactly how to play and where to place his pieces. Instead, I opted for Karpov's continuation, which requires my opponent to solve new strategic problems.

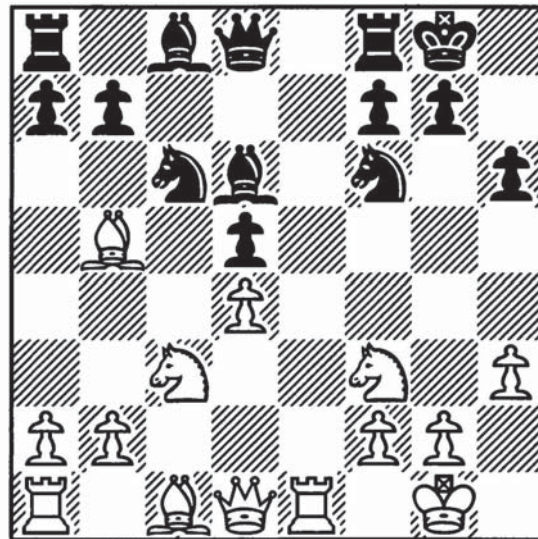
**9...cxd4**

At the time I was worried about 9...c4!, planning to bring the c8-bishop to d3, but Browne still hopes to reach a typical IQP. The variation with 9 h3!? obtained some popularity after Karpov's victories and this game, so it is strange that the logical move 9...c4 has never been played in this position.

**10 exd4!?**

Exactly the idea introduced by Karpov. Now the strategic plans of both sides are unclear. Both sides have many opportunities to place their pieces in different ways. Many choices allow more room for second-best decisions, especially for someone who makes decisions based on calculations rather than general considerations. A player who calculates variations can drown in them and end up choosing the wrong way, because this position is inherently impossible to solve by calculation.

10...h6 11 ♖e1



11...♗f5!

Browne solves the first task correctly. His move is better than 11...♖c7 12 ♗e3 ♗d7 13 ♖c1 a6 14 ♗d3 ♖fe8 15 a3 ♖ac8 16 b4, as in A.Karpov-P.Leko, Dortmund 1994, when White controls the important b1-h7 diagonal; or similarly 11...♗d7 12 ♗e5 ♖c8 13 a3 a6 14 ♗a4 b5 15 ♗b3 ♗e6 16 ♗c2 ♖b6 17 ♗e3 ♖fd8 18 ♗g4 ♗xg4 19 hxg4 ♗b8 20 ♗f5, A.Karpov-Morovic Fernandez, Las Palmas (1st matchgame) 1994, and again it is White who controls the b1-h7 diagonal. It is amazing to see such experienced and strong grandmasters as Leko and Morovic play these positions so poorly.

Black has more than one way to equalize in this position; for instance, E.Tomashevsky-T.Sanikidze, European Championship, Plovdiv 2008, continued 11...♖e8!? 12 ♖xe8+ ♖xe8 13 ♗e3 ♗f5 14 ♖b3 a6 15 ♗f1 ♗a5 16 ♖b6 ♖d8 and White hasn't achieved anything.

12 ♗e5 ♖c8 13 ♗f4

White could transpose to a clearer strategic position by playing 13 ♗xc6!? bxc6 14 ♗f4, and if 14...c5 then 15 ♗b5 ♗b8 16 dxc5 ♖xc5 17 ♗d4, when his position is preferable. Instead, I preferred to maintain the strategically unclear nature of the position rather than clarify White's strategic aims. In any case, Black could also play 14...♗e4!, which equalizes.

*Joel:* So you want to keep the position as complicated as possible?

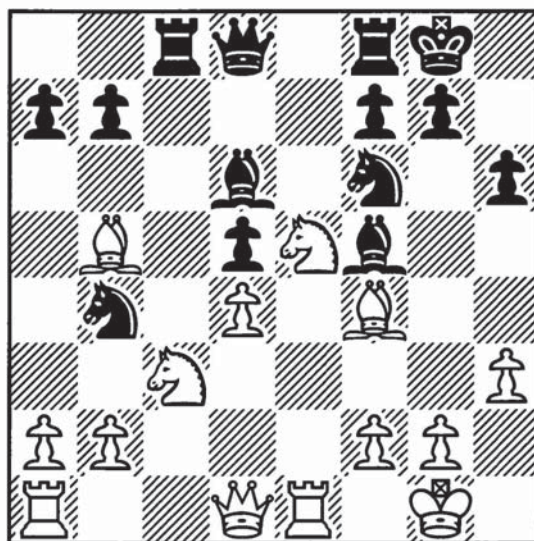
*Boris:* I want the position to be strategically unclear for as long as possible, yes.

*Joel:* Why is that?

*Boris:* To give him more chances to go wrong, crunching variation after variation.

13...♗b4!





Again, Browne plays an active and logical move. In the case of 13...♘a5?! 14 ♖f3, Black has to defend against the very unpleasant threat of ♙xh6; while after 13...♗e8 14 ♖a4 ♖b6, White has 15 ♘g4!?, leading to a dangerous position for Black whose d5-pawn is vulnerable. Browne finds the best path.

*Joel:* Why is it so logical?

*Boris:* It creates the threat of ...♘c2, while also relieving the pressure on the c6-square.

**14 ♖c1 ♘e4!**

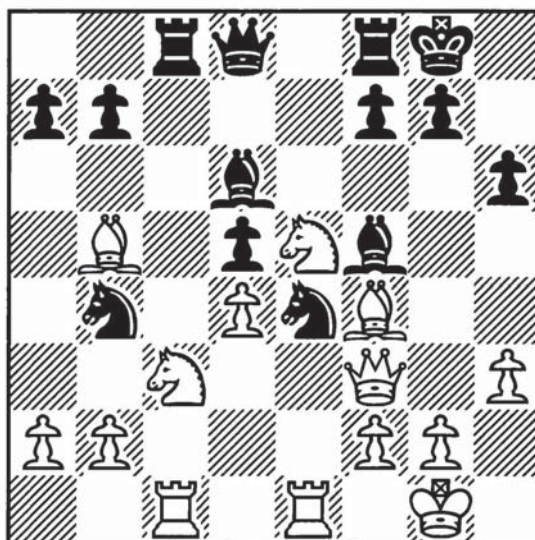
Once more, Browne continues in the most energetic fashion. Black would be in trouble after 14...♖b6!? 15 ♙a4 ♗fd8 16 a3 ♘c6 17 ♙xc6 bxc6 18 ♙xh6!, when the bishop is untouchable because of 18...gxh6 19 ♖f3, attacking bishop and knight.

*Joel:* Browne seems to be finding all the best moves, and it doesn't appear that your strategy is working. Were you worried during the game? Did you start to second-guess yourself and your strategy?

*Boris:* No, because the position is becoming more and more complicated, requiring more and more calculations – and when this happens, it creates the possibility for a mistake, which is what happened in the game. Browne is a strong grandmaster. I wasn't expecting him to make a mistake early on in the struggle.

**15 ♖f3!?**

The position demanded, from both sides, a lot of calculation of long and unclear lines. Here 15 ♖b3!? was an interesting alternative, but then 15...♖b6! (not 15...♖h4?! 16 ♘xe4 ♙xe4? due to 17 ♗xc8 ♗xc8 18 ♗xe4 dxe4 19 ♖xf7+ ♔h7 20 ♖f5+ and White wins; even after 16...♗xc1! 17 ♗xc1 ♙xe4 18 ♙d2, Black is in trouble because the knight on b4 is vulnerable) 16 ♘xe4 ♗xc1 17 ♗xc1 ♙xe4 18 ♘d7 ♖xb5 19 ♙xd6 ♖xd7 20 ♖xb4 ♗c8 leads to a completely drawish position. The move I played preserves the tension and contains a trap.



### 15...♞xc3

My opponent decided that, after several excellent moves, he deserved to win a pawn. Very interesting complications would have arisen after 15...♞b6!?. For example:

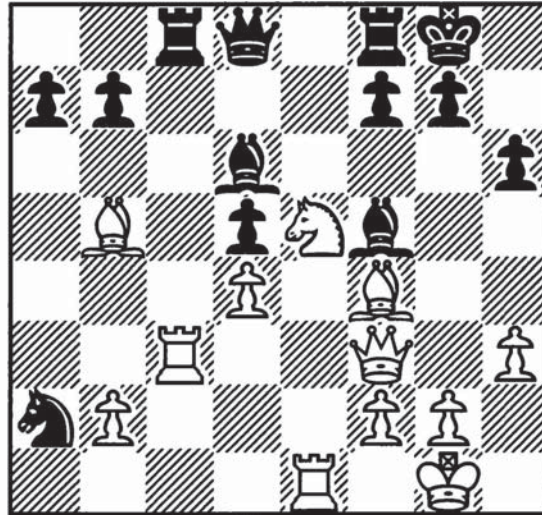
a) 16 ♙d7 ♙xe5 17 ♙xc8 ♙xf4 18 ♙xf5 ♙xc1 19 ♚xc1 ♞f6 with an equal position; here 19...♞xc3 20 bxc3 ♞xa2 would be too risky, as after 21 ♚c2, it is unclear whether Black's knight can escape from exile on a2.

b) 16 ♙xh6 ♙xe5!? (this leads to a very unclear position; the simple 16...♞xd4 17 ♞xf5 ♞xe5 18 ♞xe5 ♙xe5 19 ♞xd5 ♞xd5 20 ♚xe4 ♙xb2 reaches an approximately equal end-game) 17 dxe5 (here 17 ♞xf5 may be more promising, and if 17...♙xd4 18 ♞xe4 ♚xc1 19 ♙xc1 ♞xb5 then 20 ♞g5 ♞d3 21 ♞g4 with chances for an advantage since Black's king is underprotected) 17...♙g6 18 ♙d7 ♚cd8 19 ♙e3 d4 20 ♞xe4 ♞d3 21 ♚ed1 ♙xe4 22 ♞xe4 ♞xc1 23 ♙xd4 ♚xd7 24 ♙xb6 ♚xd1+ 25 ♙h2 axb6 26 ♞xb7 and White, with three extra pawns, is probably not worse than Black with his army of pieces.

An unclear position would have appeared after 15...♞f6 as well. To calculate and evaluate all these murky lines is very difficult, so Browne seeks clarity instead.

### 16 ♚xc3 ♞xa2?

Black needed to turn away from his plan of winning the a2-pawn. But 16...♞b6?! can be refuted as well: 17 ♙xh6 ♚xc3 18 ♞xf5! ♙xe5 (or 18...♚c7 19 ♙xg7! ♙xg7 20 ♞g5+ ♙h8 21 ♞d7!, when White is a piece down but has a crushing attack) 19 ♞xe5, winning a pawn. The correct defense was 16...♞c2! 17 ♚d1 ♙e4, when 18 ♞g3 leads to a tense position.



*Exercise:* What would you play? (difficulty level 5)

*Joel:* White can win the d5-pawn with 17 ♖xc8 ♜xc8 18 ♜xd5 (not 18 ♔xh6? because the bishop on f5 is now protected by the queen), when Black doesn't have 18...♔e6 (because the d6-bishop hangs) or 18...♖d8 (because f7 hangs with check).

*Boris:* In your variation, Black would play 18...♔xe5 and bring his knight back to b4, when White hasn't achieved much. There is a much better way, which I played in the game. **17 ♜xf7!**

Now all Black's pieces lose coordination, while White's pieces are well orchestrated. In addition, Black's back rank cannot be protected.

**17...♜a5**

If 17...♖xf7 then 18 ♖xc8 ♔xc8 19 ♖e8+ ♜xe8 20 ♔xe8 ♖xf4 21 ♜xd5+ and White wins.

*Joel:* What about 18...♜xc8 - ?

*Boris:* I would still play 19 ♖e8+, winning his queen and the rest of his pieces as well.

It doesn't help Black to take on c3 himself: after 17...♜xc3 (or 17...♖xc3 18 bxc3 ♔xf7 19 ♜xd5+) 18 ♜xd8 ♔e4 19 ♜g4 ♔f5 20 ♜g3 ♔xf4 21 ♜xf4 ♜xb5 22 ♜xb7, White is still winning.

**18 ♜xd6**

White chooses the simple win. There was a more spectacular finish in 18 ♜xh6+! gxh6 (18...♔h8 19 ♜xf5 ♜xc3 20 ♔xd6 is lethal as well) 19 ♜xd5+ ♔h8 20 ♜xd6 and it will soon be mate.

**18...♜xc3 19 bxc3 ♔e4 20 ♜g4 ♜xc3 1-0**

Black resigned, because after 21 ♖f1 (or 21 ♖e3) 21...♖cd8 22 ♔e5, he is unable to protect g7 without losing more material.

The goal that I had in this game was to reach positions that permitted a lot of calculation, but demanded difficult evaluation. The only line that led to clarity was a variation that won a pawn for Black, but also led him to disaster.



## Chapter Nine

# The Struggle with the Major Pieces

The topic of the single game in this chapter is the struggle with major pieces. The quality that characterizes these positions is that they are both middlegames and endgames simultaneously. To estimate such a position as an endgame only can be fatal, as was shown in the first game of the 1910 World Championship match between Emanuel Lasker and Carl Schlechter, where Lasker played as if it was an endgame and got mated. The safety of the kings is a matter of paramount importance in the evaluation of these positions.

### Game 22 I.Dorfman-B.Gulko USSR Championship, Yerevan 1975 *Queen's Indian Defense*

**1 c4 ♘f6 2 ♘c3 e6 3 ♘f3 b6 4 g3 ♙b7 5 ♙g2 ♙e7 6 0-0 0-0 7 d4 ♘e4 8 ♚c2 ♘xc3 9 ♚xc3 c5**

This move was very popular at the time because of Korchnoi's games, so I spent a lot of time studying it. Soon, however, Korchnoi returned to the old move 9...f5, which is more flexible. In the 1977 USSR Championship in Leningrad, where Dorfman and I tied for first, I played 9...f5 against him and we continued 10 b3 ♙f6 11 ♙b2 ♘c6 12 ♘e5 ♘xd4 13 ♚xd4 ♙xg2 14 ♙xg2 d6 15 ♚e3 ♙xe5 16 ♙xe5 dxe5 17 ♚xe5 ♚d7 with drawish simplifications.

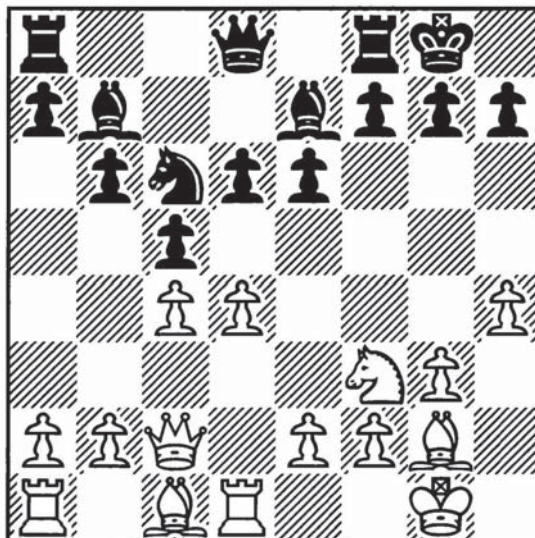
**10 ♙d1**

The previous year, I won nicely in a game that continued 10 b3 d6 11 ♙b2 ♙f6 12 ♙fd1 ♚e7 13 ♚c2 ♘c6 14 e4 e5 15 d5 ♘d4 16 ♘xd4 exd4 and Black eventually broke through on the queenside, J.Rukavina-B.Gulko, Sombor 1974.

**10...d6 11 ♚c2**

With this move White prevents the set-up that brought me success in my game against Rukavina. Nevertheless, 11 ♖f4 is more challenging, which Tal played against me in the 1976 USSR Championship in Moscow. The game continued 11...♘d7 12 dxc5 ♘xc5 13 b4 ♘e4 14 ♖d3 ♜c8 15 ♜ac1 (after 15 ♘d2 ♘xd2 16 ♖xb7 ♘xc4 17 ♖xc8 ♜xc8, according to Tal, Black has enough for the exchange because of the strong knight on c4) 15...d5 16 cxd5 ♜xd5 17 ♜xc8 ♜xc8 18 ♘d2 ♜xd3 19 exd3 g5! and Black survived. But Black has to play precisely not to be crushed in this variation, which is why I later switched to 9...f5.

**11...♘c6 12 h4?!**



**Exercise:** Evaluate the position and find the best way for Black. (difficulty level 4)

**Joel:** Black is in danger of being saddled with a weak d6-pawn, so I would like to deal with this threat. Neither 12...cxd4 nor 12...♘xd4 solves this problem, and 12...♜c7 runs into 13 ♖f4; so perhaps it makes sense to play 12...d5, because Black has a tempo move with ...♘b4 and can quickly bring his rooks to contest the c- and d-files.

**Boris:** Dorfman's last move indicates that he also thought his position was good. In those years, Bent Larsen was among the best and tried to push his a- and h-pawns two squares all the time.

After 12...♜c7, you don't have to be afraid of 13 ♖f4 because it would be a mistake. Black would take twice on d4 and play ...e6-e5, forking White. I don't like your recommendation 12...d5 either because White can play 13 dxc5 bxc5 14 cxd5 exd5 15 ♘g5, profiting from the pawn being on h4, when White is better because he attacks h7 and d5. If Black attacks the queen with 14...♘b4 instead, White just plays 15 ♜b1 and the assessment of the position as inferior for Black doesn't change.

My evaluation is that, because of the move 12 h4, White is now behind in development and the queen on c2 can be vulnerable on the c-file, so Black has to open the position with 12...cxd4!.

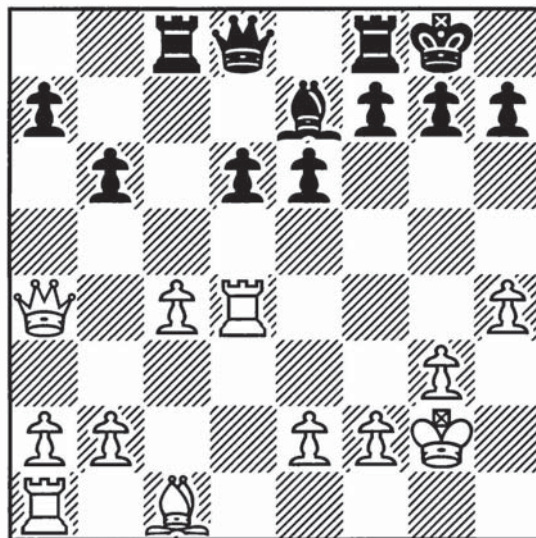


The most promising way for White was 12 d5 ♖b4 13 ♜d2 exd5 14 cxd5 ♙f6 (Black cannot take on d5 because of 14...♖xd5 15 ♖e1 or 14...♙xd5 15 a3) 15 a3 ♖a6 16 ♜b1 with a pleasant position for White, who won an excellent game, V.Salov-V.Anand, Linares 1991.  
**12...cxd4!**

12...♖xd4 was not as good, because after 13 ♖xd4 ♙xg2 14 ♖xe6! fxe6 15 ♙xg2, the game is equal.

**13 ♖xd4 ♖xd4! 14 ♜xd4 ♙xg2 15 ♙xg2 ♜c8 16 ♜a4?!**

White tries to play actively and attack the a7-pawn, but he should have defended with 16 b3, intending 16...♙f6 (16...b5 is another possibility, amongst several) 17 ♙g5!. Then White has to evaluate 17...♙xd4 18 ♙xd8 ♙xa1 19 ♙e7 ♜fe8 20 ♙xd6 ♜ed8, since Black's rooks can sometimes be better than White's queen in such positions.



**Exercise:** Find the best way for Black to utilize his advantages. (difficulty level 5)

**Joel:** Well, if Black's advantage is his lead in development, then what about 16...d5 - ? My idea is to reorganize my pieces with tempo, so after 17 cxd5 ♙c5, followed by ...♜f6 (attacking f2), I can follow with either ...e6xd5 or ...♜e8, when all my pieces are active and attacking White's lone king.

**Boris:** Your suggestion has serious drawbacks. Here the pawn on c4 is a positional weakness and you allow White to rid himself of it. After 16...d5 17 cxd5 ♙c5 18 ♜d3 ♜f6, White has 19 ♜f4 with an extra pawn.

The move I played in the game leads to a good position, but the strongest was 16...♜e8! 17 ♜xe8 (White cannot take on a7 due to 17 ♜xa7? ♜c6+ 18 f3 ♙f6, followed by ...♜a8, winning the queen) 17...♜fxe8 and White cannot comfortably protect his c4-pawn; e.g. 18 ♜e4 e5 19 b3 (if 19 g4, not 19...♙xh4? 20 g5, but 19...h5 20 f3 ♙xh4 21 g5 ♙e1 and the bishop escapes via b4 or, after ...h5-h4, via g3) 19...f5 20 ♜e3 e4 and White's position is extremely uncomfortable.



*Joel:* After ...d5, it looks like White is in danger of losing a rook.

*Boris:* Yes, or else Black's rook will penetrate to c2, which is also very unpleasant.

**16...♙f6?! 17 ♙g5!?**

Dorfman decides to transpose to a position with major pieces. Maybe White had more chances to defend with 17 ♚d3!? ♜c7 (after 17...♜c7 18 ♜b1 ♜a8+ 19 f3 ♜fc8 20 ♜xd6 ♜xc4 21 ♜d8+!, White escapes) 18 ♜b1 ♜xc4 19 ♜xc4 ♜xc4 20 ♜xd6 ♜c2, but his position is still dangerous; e.g. 21 ♜d7 ♜xe2 22 ♙f1 ♜c2 23 ♜xa7 ♙d4 24 ♙e3 ♙xe3 25 fxe3 ♜d8.

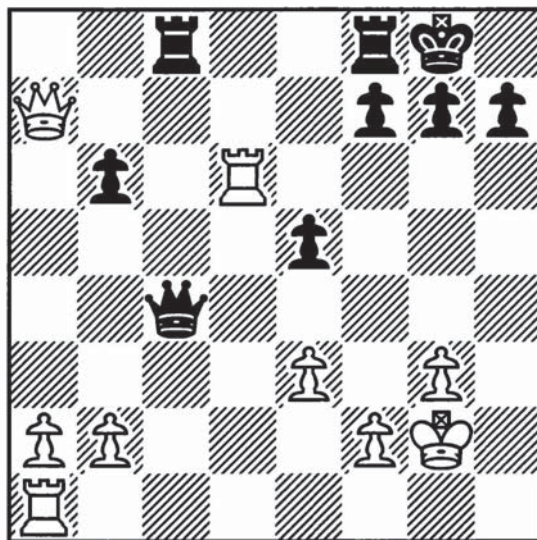
**17...♙xg5 18 hxg5 ♜xg5 19 ♜xa7?!**

It was preferable to take the d-pawn first: 19 ♜xd6!? ♜g4 20 ♜d2 ♜e4+ 21 f3 (worse is 21 ♙g1 ♜c5!, threatening to attack down the h-file) 21...♜xc4 22 ♜xa7 ♜e3, though Black keeps the initiative.

**19...♜c5!**

Black isn't promised much by 19...♜xc4 20 ♜xb6.

**20 e3 e5 21 ♜d5 ♜xc4 22 ♜xd6**



**Exercise:** What should Black play? (difficulty level 4)

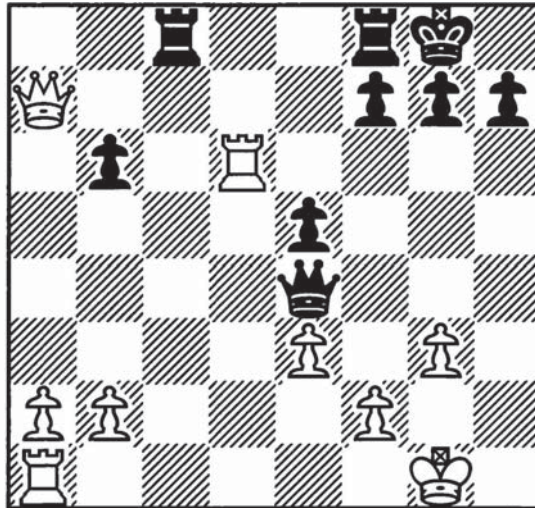
*Joel:* I'd like to play ...f7-f5 but then ♜d7 is strong, so what about 22...♜c7, protecting the seventh rank and sacrificing the b-pawn, followed by 23...f5 - ?

*Boris:* That doesn't work because, apart from anything else, White has 23 ♜xb6 f5 24 ♜b3, exchanging queens. Your plan doesn't work on principle because you weaken the seventh rank, the a2-g8 diagonal, and the position of your king. Much better is 22...♜e4+, worsening the position of White's king.

**22...♜e4+!**

The natural 22...♜e2 was inferior, as after 23 ♜xb6 ♜c2 24 ♜f1 ♜xb2 25 ♜c5, the position is equal.

**23 ♙g1**



**Exercise:** What would you play now? (difficulty level 3)

*Joel:* I'd still like to play 23...♖c2 but after 24 ♜xb6 ♜f3, White can defend with 25 ♜f1. I don't see a good way of getting my other rook involved yet either. Instead, 23...h5 seems good because it threatens to break up White's kingside.

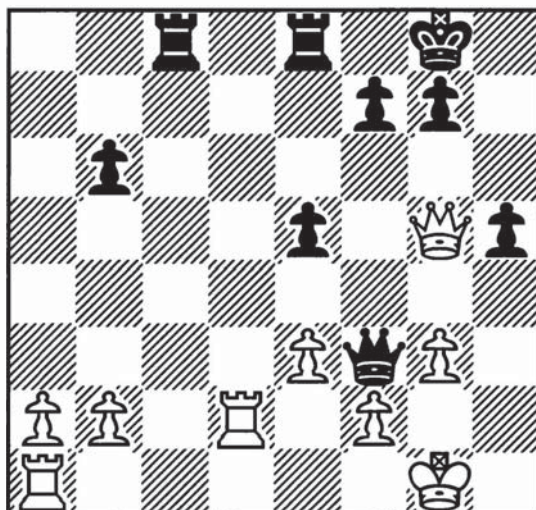
*Boris:* Very good! You made a correct evaluation of the first line, seeing that it didn't promise much, and then found a way to use your h-pawn in the attack.

**23...h5! 24 ♜e7**

In the case of 24 ♜xb6? h4, White's king position falls apart. Black also keeps the initiative after 24 ♜xb6 h4 25 ♜b7 ♜f5.

**24...♜fe8 25 ♜g5 ♜f3! 26 ♜d2?!**

Here 26 ♜xb6!? ♜c4 27 e4! ♜xe4 28 ♜b3 ♜e2 is more challenging for Black, when the rook on b3 is useful for defense.



**Exercise:** How does Black improve his position? (difficulty level 4)

*Joel:* How about 26...f6 - ? I don't think White's queen will be able to prevent ...h5-h4.

*Boris:* What do you do after 27 ♖g6 - ?

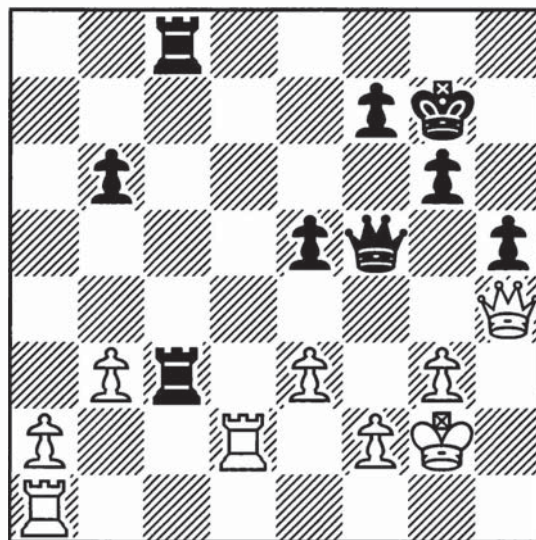
*Joel:* 27...h4 of course.

*Boris:* And after 28 ♜d7 - ? It looks like you are getting mated. Again, you've compromised your king, the safety of which can be one of your main advantages in this position. A better move is 26...g6. Instead of weakening the king, Black creates more space for him to move. The importance of ...g7-g6 can be seen after 26...♞c4 27 ♜d8 ♞xd8 28 ♚xd8+ ♔h7, when 29 ♚d3+ ♞e4 30 ♞c1 g6 31 ♞c4 reaches an equal endgame.

**26...g6! 27 ♚h4**

White defends against the threat of ...♞c4. The advantages of Black's last quiet move can be seen in the following variations as well: 27 ♞ad1 ♞c2! and White is paralyzed; or 27 a4 ♞c4 28 ♜d8 ♞xd8 29 ♚xd8+ ♔g7 30 ♚d6 h4! 31 ♚xe5+ ♔h7 and Black's attack is unstoppable.

**27...♔g7! 28 b3 ♞c3 29 ♚h1 ♚f5 30 ♚h4 ♞ec8 31 ♔g2**



**Exercise:** How should Black proceed? (difficulty level 3)

*Joel:* My pieces are well placed but I don't see any good pawn moves. I've weakened my kingside and paid the price for it several times in this game, so I'm weary of ...g6-g5. I could prepare it with ...♔h6, though, intending ...g6-g5.

*Boris:* I like your considerations, but while it is important to be careful it is also important not to be afraid and overly cautious. You don't need to prepare the move ...g6-g5 but can instead play it immediately. White cannot use the disadvantages of pushing your g-pawn against you here. Moreover; pushing your g-pawn now creates mating threats



against White's king.

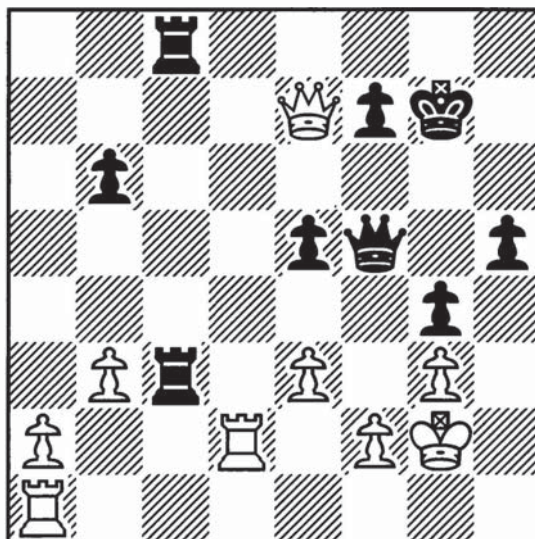
Joel: But what about 32 ♖xh5 - ? Then the f3-square is protected.

Boris: What moves would you consider here?

Joel: Oh, I see, 32...♖h8 is a killer.

Boris: Correct.

31...g5! 32 ♖b4 g4! 33 ♖e7



**Exercise:** Find the most resolute continuation. (difficulty level 4)

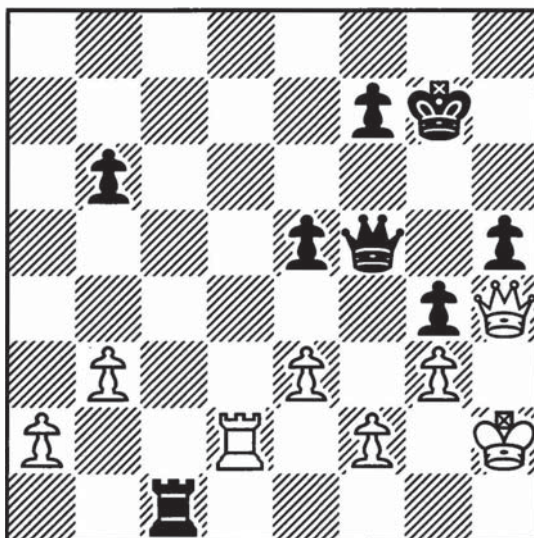
Joel: 33...h4 and if 34 ♖xh4 then 34...♖h8 wins.

Boris: While after 34 gxh4, Black has a forced win with 34...♖c1 45 ♖xc1 ♖f3+ 46 ♔h2 ♖h3+ 47 ♔g1 ♖xc1 and mates. The move I played in the game doesn't spoil anything, but you're right that the immediate 33...h4 was stronger because White can now stop ...h5-h4 with 34 ♖h4.

33...♖c7 34 ♖h4

In the case of 34 ♖d6!? h4!, White would still be defenseless; e.g. 35 gxh4 ♖c6 36 ♖d5 ♖c5 37 ♖b7 (37 ♖d6 doesn't solve White's problems either: 37...♖8c6 38 ♖e7 ♖f3+ 39 ♔h2 ♖g6 40 ♔g1 g3 with mate to follow) 37...♖8c6 38 ♔g1 ♖f3 39 ♖f1 ♖c1 and wins.

34...♖c1 35 ♖xc1 ♖xc1 36 ♔h2



**Exercise:** Black to play and win. (difficulty level 3)

*Joel:* 36...f6 and White can resign.

*Boris:* Very good! 36...f6 cuts off White's queen and finishes the game.

**36...f6! 37 f4 ♕e4 38 ♖d7+ ♔g6 0-1**

## Chapter Ten

# Some Strategic Ideas in the Sicilian Defense

Now we will begin a new topic: Black's strategy in the Sicilian Defense. Of course, this depends on which lines White chooses, so in the first case we will look at how to play when White takes a quiet, positional approach. Central to this topic is the Sicilian endgame, in which Black typically gains counterplay on the queenside due to the semi-open c-file.

### Game 23 A.Suetin-B.Gulko Moscow Championship 1983 *Sicilian Defense*

**1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 d6 6 ♗c4 ♜b6 7 ♘b3 e6 8 0-0 a6?!**

Practice from the last couple of decades has shown that it is better to play 8...♗e7! immediately.

**9 a4!**

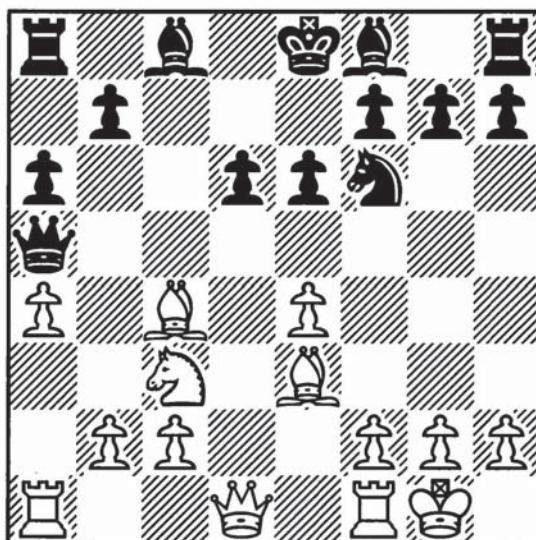
In the case of the natural 9 ♗e3 ♜c7 10 f4, my idea was to postpone the development of my kingside and try to obtain counterplay immediately with 10...b5 11 ♗d3 ♗b7 instead. The drawback to this line is that Black probably weakens the b6-square prematurely.

**9...♘a5!?**

Black avoids 9...♜c7 10 a5 b5 11 axb6 ♜xb6 12 ♗e3, when White's prospects on the queenside look good.

**10 ♗e3 ♜c7 11 ♘xa5 ♜xa5**





### 12 f3

White's plan is to exchange queens and put pressure on the d6-pawn, which cannot be supported by other pawns. However, 12 f4!? was more challenging. White's bishop on the a2-g8 diagonal can be useful if he is able to undermine the e6-pawn with f4-f5. Otherwise, Black's pawns on f7 and e6 restrict White's light-squared bishop.

### 12...♙e7 13 ♖d4

My opponent continues his plan of exchanging queens. The alternative was 13 ♖d2!? ♙d7 14 ♖fd1, when Black cannot castle immediately because of 14...0-0? 15 ♘d5.

### 13...♙d7!

*Joel:* Why an exclamation for this move?

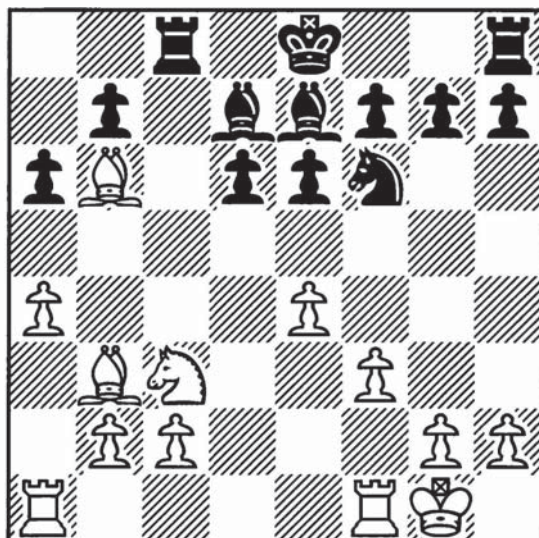
*Boris:* Understanding White's plan, I prepare for the endgame, when the king is often better placed in the center than on the flank.

### 14 ♖b6

Here 14 b4!? was more challenging; e.g. 14...♖c7 (after 14...♖xb4 15 ♖fb1 ♖a5 16 ♖xb7 0-0 17 ♖ab1, White is very active) 15 ♙b3 with a complicated middlegame.

### 14...♖xb6 15 ♙xb6 ♖c8! 16 ♙b3

White has to maintain control of the d5-square. In the case of 16 ♙e2 ♙c6, Black is ready for ...d6-d5 with a good game.



**Exercise:** What should Black play? (difficulty level 3)

*Joel:* I think you have to get rid of the bishop on b6 by playing 16...♙d8, so that you can follow with ...♙e7 and ...♞fd8.

*Boris:* Correct! Castling would be a serious mistake here because it would allow White to fulfill his plan.

*Joel:* How so?

*Boris:* White would be able to double rooks on the d-file and bring the bishop to g3 via f2, when it is very difficult for Black to protect the d6-pawn. Probably Black would have to play ...e6-e5 and that would be a big strategic achievement for White.

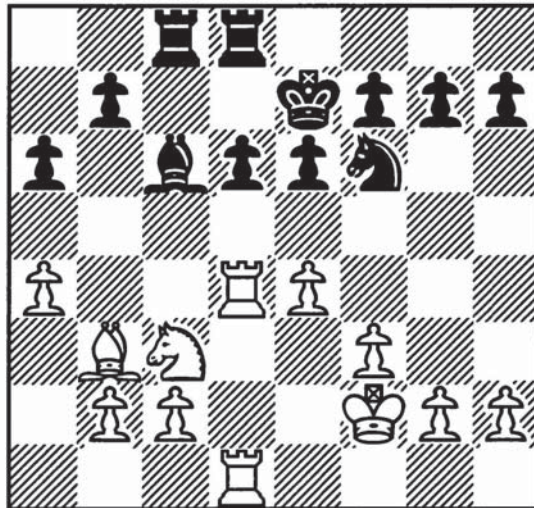
*Joel:* I've seen that set-up before in many classical Sicilian variations where Black has pawns on d6 and e5 and puts the light-squared bishop on e6, controlling d5. How would this be different?

*Boris:* In those positions – speaking generally, of course – Black has compensation because he controls important central squares and has counterplay in the middlegame with queens on the board. Here, we are heading for an endgame without those factors, so Black would just be worse.

**16...♙d8! 17 ♙xd8**

Now 17 ♙f2 ♙a5! (heading for b4 to protect d6) 18 ♞fd1 ♙e7 19 ♙g3 ♙b4 is not attractive for White, since Black's pieces are nicely coordinated.

**17...♙xd8 18 ♞fd1 ♙e7 19 ♞d4 ♞hd8 20 ♞ad1 ♙c6 21 ♙f2**



**Exercise:** The game turns into a positional struggle.  
What would you play here? (difficulty level 2)

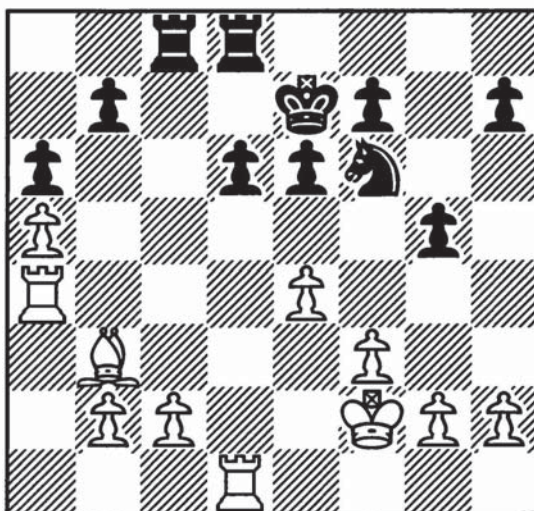
*Joel:* I would play 21...g5, preventing White from expanding on the kingside.

*Boris:* Very good! That is a good positional move because you take control of the dark squares. Going back, White should have preferred 21 h4!, trying to take space on the kingside.

**21...g5! 22 a5!? ♗e8! 23 ♘a4?!**

White fails to prevent Black from fulfilling his plan. Here 23 ♖b4! was better, when Black would play 23...♞c7, planning to transfer the knight from f6 to c6 via d7 and e5.

**23...♗xa4 24 ♞xa4**



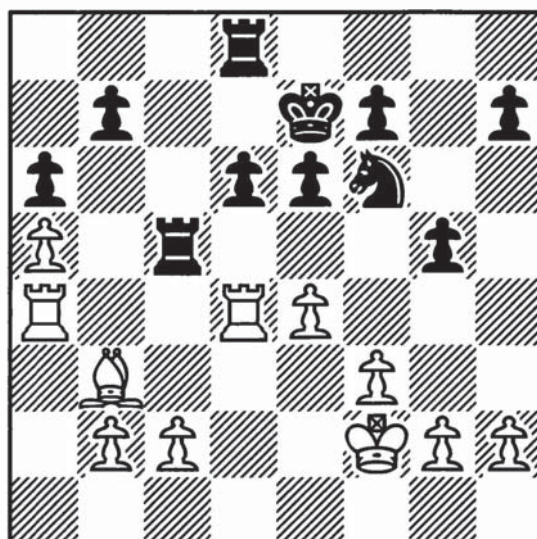
**Exercise:** What should Black do now? (difficulty level 1)



Joel: I guess I would play 24...♖c5.

Boris: Very good! The rook on c5 is actively placed, keeping White pinned down to the defense of the pawn on a5, and uses both the fifth rank and c-file to his advantage. *If your rook works simultaneously on both a rank and file, its usefulness increases twofold.*

24...♖c5 25 ♜dd4



**Exercise:** Find a maneuver that improves Black's position. (difficulty level 3)

Joel: I would like to reposition the knight so that it takes part in the game on the queen-side; therefore, I would play 25...♞d7, intending ...♞e5-c6.

Boris: Very good!

Joel: I took a long time on that one because I was thinking about what to do if White responds 26 ♜db4. In that case, I planned to play 26...♖c7, followed by 27...♞c5.

Boris: This is what happened in the game, except that you shouldn't play 26...♖c7 because it would spoil your position. As we have discussed, the rook on c5 is very well placed because it is working along both rank and file. Retreating your rook to c7 would cut its power in half. Whereas the rook on d8 isn't doing anything, so 26...♜db8 would be much better.

Joel: There I go again, moving a piece from a good position to a worse position.

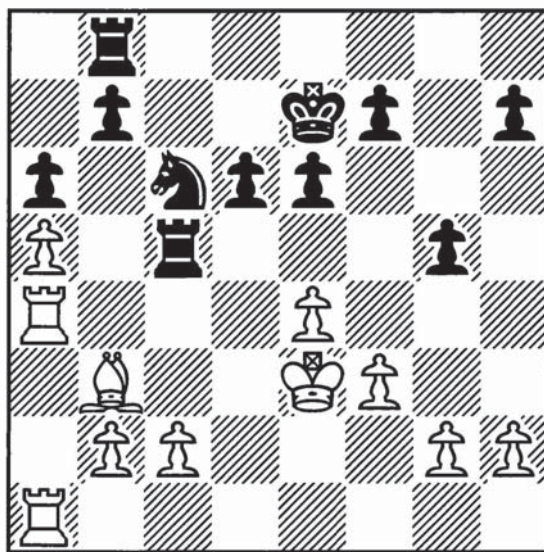
25...♞d7 26 ♜db4 ♜b8 27 ♙e3?!

A typical psychological moment. White thought he had some initiative, attacking d6 then b7, and missed the optimum moment to fight for a draw instead.

Joel: He misevaluated the position that badly?

Boris: It is very difficult to switch from believing you have the initiative and some advantage to realizing you need to defend and fight for the draw. Very often people realize it one move too late. Either 27 ♜c4!? ♞e5 28 ♜xc5 dxc5 or Dvoretsky's recommendation 27 ♙c4!? was a better defense.

27...♘e5 28 ♖a1 ♘c6 29 ♜ba4



**Exercise:** How can Black develop his initiative? (difficulty level 4)

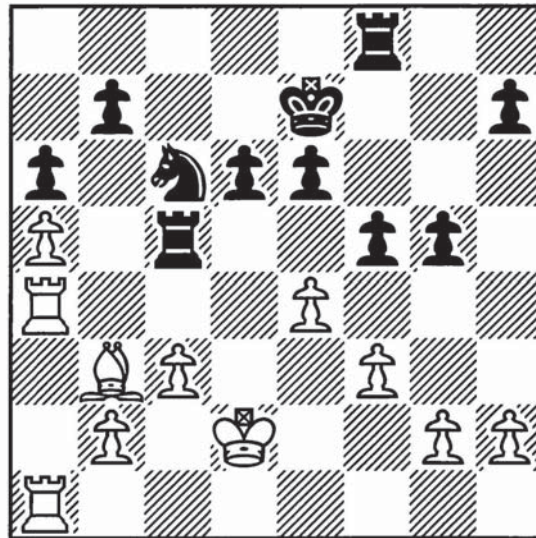
*Joel:* My idea is to create a second weakness on the kingside because White's pieces are tied to the defense of a5, though I don't know exactly how to do that. I was thinking about either 29...h5 or 29...♜h8 and then ...h7-h5. In addition, the rook on c5 can swing over to the kingside along the fifth rank. I guess, because I don't know where the rook should go just yet, I would play 29...h5 and take it from there.

*Boris:* You're right that White's rooks are stuck on the queenside so Black has to create play on the kingside. However, the moves you offered don't solve this problem. What Black has to do is activate his second rook on the f-file.

29...♜f8! 30 ♔d2

It would be a big relief for White to bring the bishop to c2 and include it in the fight for the center, but 30 c3 is met by 30...♜b5 31 ♜1a3 f5 and he can't play ♘c2 because the pawn on b2 hangs.

30...f5 31 c3



**Exercise:** How should Black execute his plan? (difficulty level 3)

*Joel:* I guess I would play 31...g4.

*Boris:* For what purpose?

*Joel:* I don't know. I am trying to create some weaknesses on the kingside so I can penetrate White's position with my rook.

*Boris:* But 31...g4 doesn't accomplish that goal. Instead, you had to consider what would happen after 31...fxe4. In that case, White could play 32 ♖xe4, when 32...e5 33 h4 gives him enough counterplay. You should also consider the consequences of 31...♗e5. In that case, White plays 32 ♕c2 and with his bishop participating in the struggle for the center, the game becomes equal. Therefore, the correct move is 31...♜b5, when the only reasonable move for White is 32 ♔c2, but then he has been deprived of the c2-square for his bishop.

**31...♜b5! 32 ♔c2 ♜e5!**

Now White doesn't have a good defense.

**33 ♔d3**

After 33 exf5 ♜xf5, White will lose the a5-pawn.

**33...fxe4+ 34 ♜xe4**

White cannot permit a black rook to penetrate to the second rank; i.e. after 34 fxe4 ♜f2.

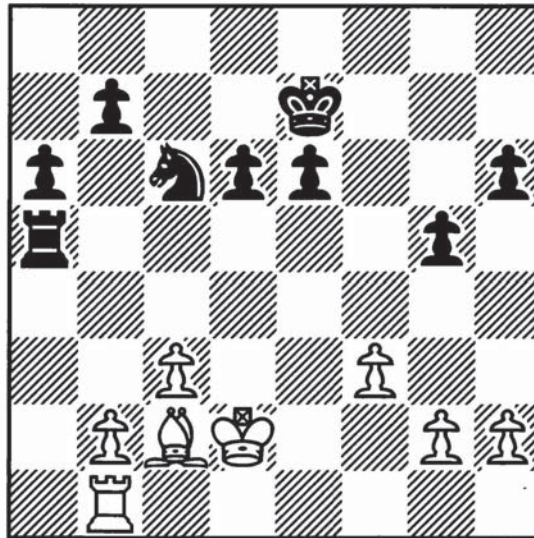
**34...♜xe4 35 ♔xe4 ♜f5**

After the natural 35...♜f4+?, Black would lose all his advantage: 36 ♔e3 ♜f5 37 ♕c2 ♜xa5 38 ♜xa5 ♘xa5 39 b4 ♘c4+ (or 39...♘c6 40 ♕xh7) 40 ♔d4 and the game is equal.

**36 ♕c2 ♜e5+ 37 ♔d3 ♜xa5 38 ♜b1 h6 39 ♔d2**

White has lost a pawn but still retains drawing chances because he has the bishop, which is generally stronger than the knight in the endgame.



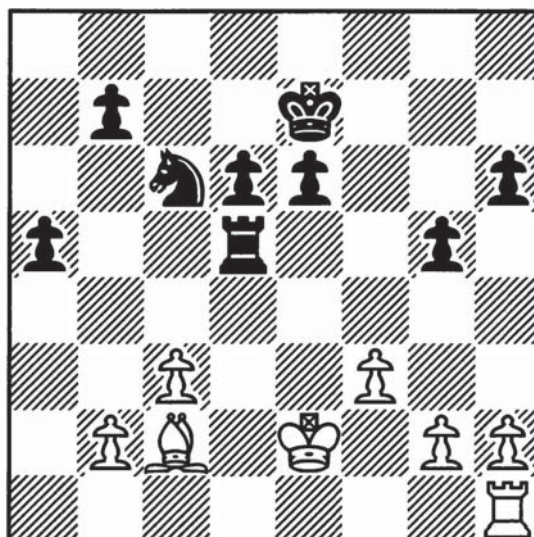


**Exercise:** How can Black improve his position? (difficulty level 3)

*Joel:* I'm not sure. I'm worried about White playing b2-b4, fixing my pawns on light squares. So I guess I would play 39...♖d5+, followed by ...b7-b6 and ...a6-a5, putting my pawns on dark squares.

*Boris:* You identified the problem correctly and your solution is correct, but ...b7-b6 is a senseless follow-up because it doesn't prevent b2-b4 – only ...a6-a5 does.

**39...♖d5+ 40 ♔e2 a5! 41 ♖h1**



**Exercise:** Find a way to improve Black's position further. (difficulty level 4)

*Joel:* I am trying to figure out how to prevent White's counterplay with h2-h4.

*Boris:* It doesn't look like you can prevent it. Instead, you have to see how you can improve your own position. Is there a way you can create threats?

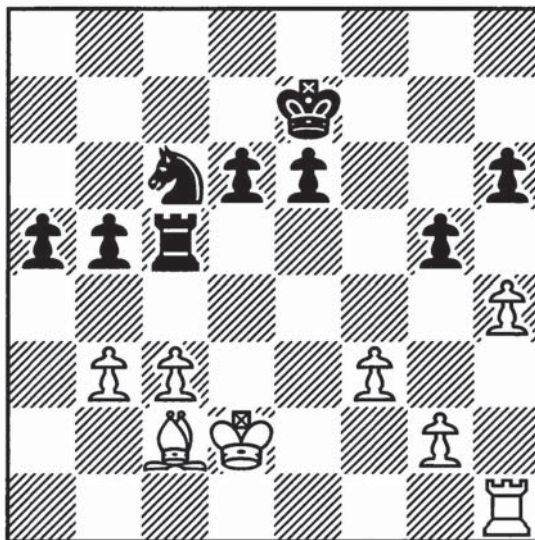
*Joel:* I was thinking about 41...♖b5, forcing 42 b3 ♜c5 when White's queenside pawns can be weak.

*Boris:* Correct!

**41...♖b5! 42 b3 ♜c5**

Now Black has a new object of attack.

**43 ♔d2 b5 44 h4**



*Exercise:* How to proceed? (difficulty level 2)

*Joel:* I am trying to decide between 44...gxf4 and 44...b4.

*Boris:* 44...gxf4 would be a serious positional mistake.

*Joel:* I was trying to calculate 45 ♜xf4 ♜g5, trying to weigh the activity of the two rooks and see what would happen if I exchanged my h-pawn for his g-pawn.

*Boris:* Unfortunately, he would simply play 46 g4 and, in addition to losing your h-pawn, your rook would be looking silly on the g-file. The correct move is 44...b4, fixing his pawns on light squares and obtaining good squares for your pieces.

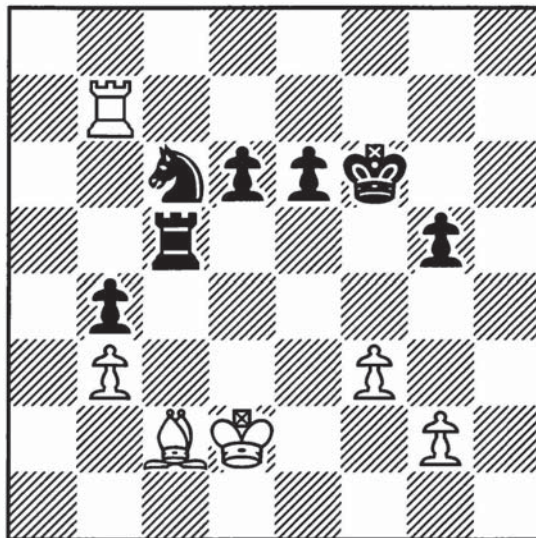
**44...b4! 45 cxb4**

Playing 45 c4 ♔d4 46 hxg5 hxg5 47 ♜h7+ ♔f6 wouldn't have made much difference. Black has a winning position because of the threat of ...d6-d5.

**45...axb4 46 hxg5 hxg5 47 ♜h7+ ♔f6 48 ♜b7**

White's counterplay in the line 48 ♜h6+ ♔e5 49 ♜g6 ♔f4 is not dangerous because the pawn on e6 is untouchable; i.e. 50 ♜xe6? loses to 50...♜xc2+ etc.



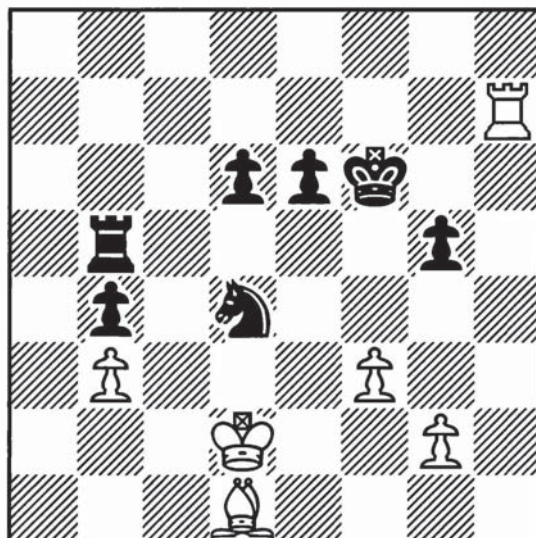


**Exercise:** What should Black do now? (difficulty level 2)

*Joel:* I would play 48...♖c3, trying to keep White's king on the second rank.

*Boris:* That's off the mark. After your move, White can retreat the bishop with 49 ♗d1, threatening to take on b4. Instead, you had to release your pieces from the defense of the b4-pawn.

48...♗d4 49 ♗d1 ♖b5 50 ♖h7



**Exercise:** Find the winning maneuver. (difficulty level 2)

*Joel:* White has a bad bishop and Black's knight dominates it. The rook is passive behind the b-pawn though, so I would activate it by moving it to the open a-file.



**Boris:** If you attack the king on the second rank, it will move to d3. You need to use both the fact that White has a bad bishop and a vulnerable king.

**Joel:** 50...♖d5 - ?

**Boris:** Yes! Now White doesn't have a defense.

**50...♖d5! 51 ♜b7?!**

Moving the king wouldn't save White either; e.g. 51 ♖e1 ♜f5 52 ♙e2 ♜a5 53 ♜b7 ♜e3 54 ♜f2 ♜d5 with the decisive threat of bringing the rook to the second rank, or 51 ♖c1 ♜f5 52 ♜b7 ♜e3 53 ♙e2 ♜xg2 (53...♖d4 is equally good) 54 ♜xb4 ♜f4 55 ♙f1 ♜d3+ 56 ♙xd3 ♜xd3 and Black is winning the rook endgame.

**51...♜xb3+ 0-1**

It looks like White didn't see that after 52 ♖e1 ♜c5, the b-pawn is untouchable due to the check on d3. And 52 ♖c2 wouldn't have helped due to 52...♖d2+ 53 ♖xb3 ♜xd1 and the b-pawn still can't be taken because Black can check from b1.

A well-known grandmaster of those years lost without making any obvious mistakes. One of the reasons for that was the counterplay Black got down the half-open c-file. Bronstein wrote that castling queenside makes sense for White in the Sicilian, because the king can protect the c2-pawn and White will have his chances on the kingside. The positional considerations are not so significant in this case. On the other hand, Bronstein also believed that if White doesn't deliver checkmate, he will be worse in the ensuing positional struggle because of Black's counterplay down the c-file. This was illustrated nicely in the game.

Your solutions to the tasks in this game were revealing too. When the exercises were about improving your position step by step, you had problems. I think this is a result of placing too much emphasis on openings and not enough on middlegame play.

The strategic attraction of the Sicilian Defense for Black is that it permits a variety of different plans. You can castle kingside, queenside, or sometimes stay in the center as well. Where you castle determines the character and sharpness of the play. In the next game we'll start with the sharpest of those possibilities.

*Game 24*  
**G.Timoscenko-B.Gulko**  
Kishinev 1975  
*Sicilian Defense*

**1 e4 c5 2 ♜f3 ♜c6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♜xd4 ♜f6 5 ♜c3 d6 6 ♙g5 ♜b6**

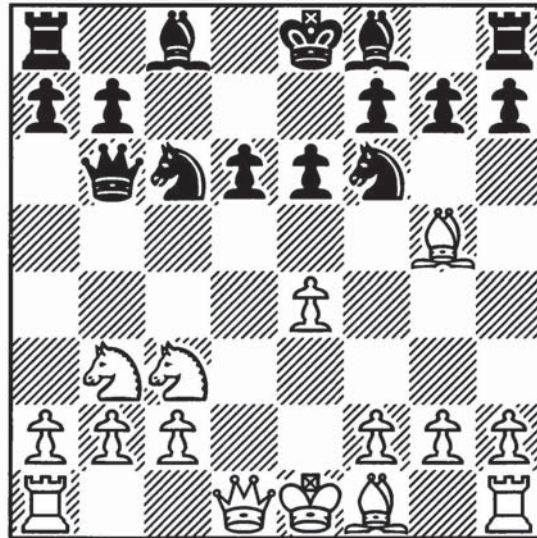
This was my favorite system in those years. We studied some of the theory in my game against Suetin in Volume 1.

**7 ♜b3**

In the 35 years or so since, it has been discovered that White is better if he offers a pawn

with 7 ♖e3!, whether or not Black accepts the offer. At the time of this game, however, that move wasn't played.

**7...e6**



**8 ♖d3**

White demonstrates his plan: To castle kingside and prepare an attack on the kingside, where he anticipates Black's king will be. Other moves would lead to different plans:

After 8 ♖d2, for example, White will castle queenside and prepare a pawn attack on the kingside.

In the case of 8 ♖xf6 gxf6, White would try to take advantage of Black's weak pawns. Probably most dangerous for Black is 8 ♖f4! ♗e5 9 ♖e3 ♜c7 10 f4 ♗c6, as played in J.Speelman-B.Gulko, Hastings 1989/90. You can see that White lost only two tempi whereas Black has lost three. So White is a tempo up in what is now a position from the Scheveningen Variation.

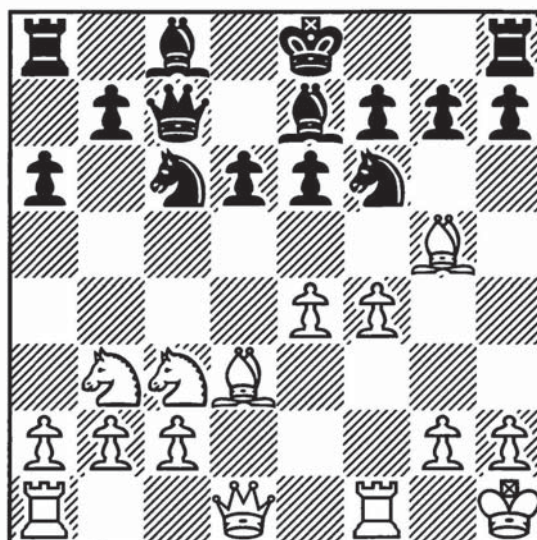
**8...♗e7 9 0-0 a6 10 ♖h1**

The quiet continuation 10 a4 ♗a5 was played in the last game of the match J.Dorfman-B.Gulko, USSR Championship play-off, Moscow 1978, which brought a storm in a glass of water after 11 ♖e3 ♜c7 12 ♗xa5 ♜xa5 13 ♜e1! ♖d7 14 h3 ♜c8 15 f4 ♖c6 16 ♜b1 ♜c7 17 b4 0-0 18 b5. Following one of Karpov's wins, this plan of b2-b4-b5 became popular in those years.

*Joel:* What does "a storm in a glass of water" mean?

*Boris:* It was a phrase that Stalin liked to use a lot. It means that the consequences are not dramatic. After 18...♖xb5! 19 ♗xb5 axb5 20 ♜xb5 d5 21 e5 ♗e4, an equal position was reached and the players soon agreed on a draw.

**10...♜c7 11 f4**



### 11...d7

Black can probably allow himself a more active set-up: 11...b5!? 12 ♖e2 (here 12 ♙xf6 ♙xf6 13 ♙xb5 ♙xc3 14 ♙xc6+ ♜xc6 15 bxc3 0-0 is not dangerous for Black) 12...♙b7 13 ♜ae1 h6 and in the case of 14 ♙h4, there is the typical trick 14...♞xe4!, planning to castle queenside.

I preferred to keep the pawns closer to the future position of the king, so I chose not to play 11...b5. The advantage of castling queenside is that White's plan of attack on the king-side, associated with ♙d3, becomes irrelevant.

In a game against Mednis at Sombor 1974, I played immediately 11...h6!? 12 ♙h4 ♙d7 (now the above-mentioned trick is unattractive: 12...♞xe4?! 13 ♞xe4 ♙xh4 14 ♜g4 and White has the advantage; e.g. 14...♙f6 15 ♞xf6+ gxf6 16 ♜g7) 13 ♙g3! 0-0 14 ♜e2 ♞b4 15 e5 and White took the initiative.

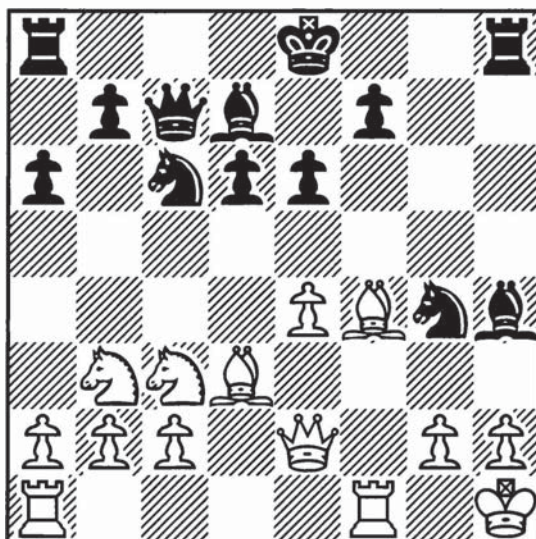
### 12 ♜f3!?

This looks like the best among the usual moves of White's queen.

In the game R.Byrne-J.Benjamin, US Championship, Berkeley 1984, Byrne played 12 ♜e2?! h6 13 ♙h4, which permitted the 13...♞xe4! trick again. Alternatively, 12 ♜e1 would be met by 12...h6 13 ♙h4 g5! 14 fxg5 hxg5 15 ♙xg5 ♞g4 16 ♙f4 ♙h4! 17 g3 ♙f6 and Black has an excellent game.

Of course White doesn't have 17 ♜e2? in this line.



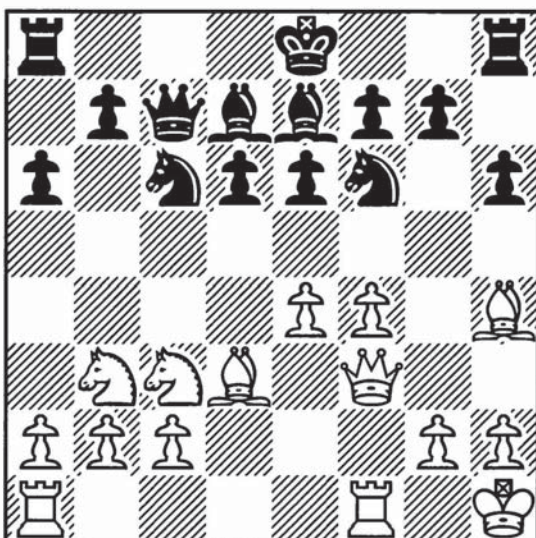


**Exercise:** Why not? What does Black play? (difficulty level 1)

*Joel:* I would play 17...♖xh2 and Black wins after either 18 ♗xh2 ♕g3 or 18 ♔xh2 ♕f2 and mates.

*Boris:* Correct.

**12...h6 13 g4**



**Exercise:** What is the most aggressive way for Black? (difficulty level 3)

*Joel:* Can I play the 13...♗xe4 trick?

*Boris:* I didn't like 13...♗xe4 here, because after 14 ♗xe7 ♗xc3 15 ♗h4! (15 ♗xd6 ♔xd6 16 bxc3 isn't bad for White either) 15...♗d5 16 ♔g3 0-0 17 c4 ♗de7 18 ♗f6 ♗g6 19 ♗c3

♞ce7 20 ♜ad1, White has a strong position for the sacrificed pawn.

Instead, with my next move, I destroy White's pawn phalanx, obtain the e5-square for the knight, and open the g-file against White's king.

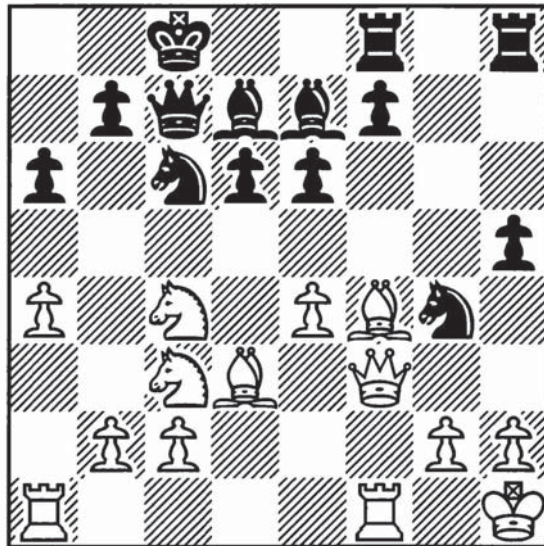
**13...g5! 14 ♟g3!**

This is certainly better than 14 fxg5 ♞e5 15 ♜e2 hxg5 16 ♟xg5 ♜xh2+! (after 16...♞h5 17 ♜e3 ♞g4 18 ♜f3 ♞g3+! 19 ♜xg3 ♞xh2 20 ♞g1 ♞xf1 21 ♜xf1 ♜g8 22 ♜f3 ♜xg5 23 ♜xf7+ ♞d8, both kings are unsafe and the position is unclear) 17 ♞xh2 ♞fg4+, when Black's prospects are superb.

**14...gxf4 15 ♟xf4 0-0-0 16 ♞d2 h5!**

Preparing to bring the knight to the e5-square via g4. Of course, 17 h3 doesn't prevent this maneuver as Black would just play 17...♞g4! anyway.

**17 ♞c4 ♞g4 18 a4 ♜df8**



**19 ♜e2?!**

White rejected the possibility of sacrificing his knight with 19 ♞b5!? axb5 20 axb5 ♞b8 21 b6 ♜c6 22 b4, when the position is unclear, despite White having only one pawn for the piece. Let me ask you: Is it more risky to sacrifice a piece without clear justification, or to give your opponent the initiative in a stable position?

*Joel:* Both seem risky to me.

*Boris:* As this game and many others demonstrate: *Not taking a risk is often riskier than taking one.*

**19...♞ce5 20 a5 ♞xc4! 21 ♟xc4 ♞e5 22 ♟d3?!**

Again White rejects an unclear sacrifice with 22 ♟xa6 bxa6 23 ♜xa6+ ♜b7 24 ♜e2. My feeling is that this sacrifice is less dangerous than the previous one, and that after 24...h4 25 h3 ♟c6, Black's position is okay.

*Joel:* It seems like White has a straightforward and potentially very dangerous attack.

*Boris:* How would you continue?

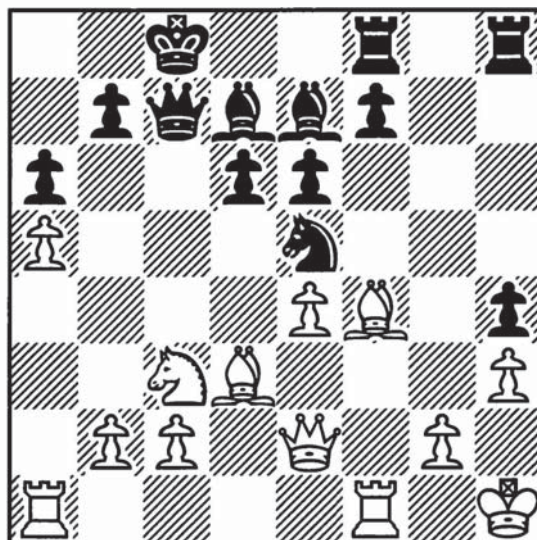
*Joel:* I would play 26 a6.

*Boris:* And after 26...♖b6, what would you play?

*Joel:* I would play 27 ♙e3.

*Boris:* But after 27...♖b4, Black seems okay. His king will be safe on d7 and the queening square a8 is overprotected by his rook and light-squared bishop.

**22...h4 23 h3**



**Exercise:** How does Black improve his position? (difficulty level 3)

*Joel:* I like 23...♖hh7, preparing 24...♖g8.

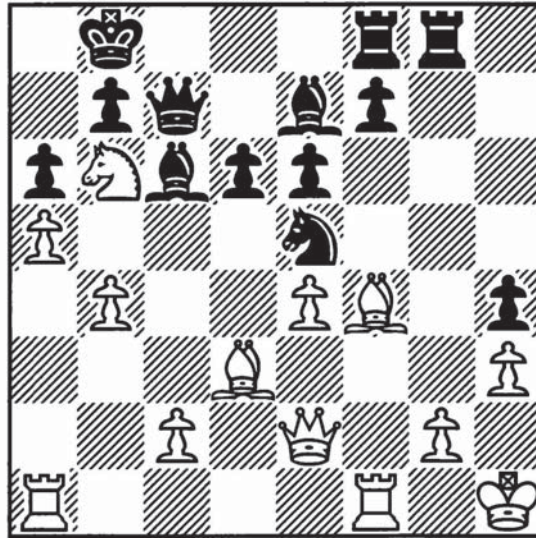
*Boris:* You're right that Black needs to have a rook on the g-file, but he doesn't need a rook on the h-file because it is impossible to see how the h-file could open up in the near future. Black's two main choices here are between 23...♖hg8 and the very natural 23...♙c6.

**23...♖hg8!**

Black postponed the necessary ...♙c6 in order to impede the b2-b4 push. In such a tense position, half a tempo can decide who will shoot first.

**24 ♘a4 ♙c6 25 ♘b6+ ♔b8 26 b4**





**Exercise:** What should Black do? (difficulty level 2)

*Joel:* 26...f5 seems very strong.

*Boris:* Correct! Now you can see the difference a tempo makes.

*Joel:* Can you explain what you mean by that? I don't understand where the tempo came from.

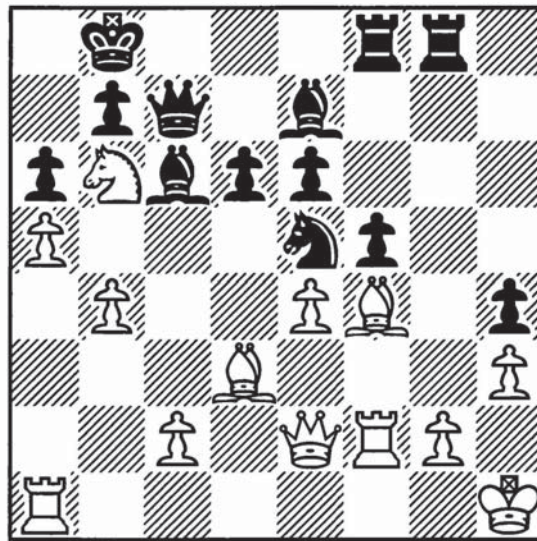
*Boris:* If I had played the natural 23...♙c6, White could have advanced 24 b4 immediately. By postponing ...♙c6, and instead playing 23...♜hg8, White couldn't play 24 b4 because the knight on c3 would hang. As a result, he had to prepare it with 24 ♖a4, and that move with the knight means that I get to shoot first.

**26...f5! 27 ♜f2?!**

White's position is already bad. For instance:

a) 27 ♜ae1 ♜xd3 28 cxd3 fxe4 29 dxe4 ♙b5 wins the exchange.

b) 27 ♙xe5 dxe5 28 ♜ab1 (28 b5 axb5 is no good for White) 28...♜d8 29 ♜f2 ♜d4 30 b5 (30 exf5 is met by 30...e4 31 ♙c4 ♜g3 and after the inevitable ...♙d6, White cannot protect the h2-square) 30...axb5 31 exf5 ♜f4! 32 ♜bf1 ♜xf2 33 ♜xf2 ♙c5 and White is defenseless.



**Exercise:** What would you play now? (difficulty level 3)

**Joel:** I guess I would play 27...♔g5, trying to get rid of White's dark-squared bishop. I looked at 27...♘xd3, which seemed really interesting, but after 28 cxd3 ♕f6 29 ♖c1 ♔d4 30 ♕e3, I couldn't see what Black has accomplished apart from giving up my strong knight on e5 and opening the c-file for White's rook, which now pins my bishop and opposes my queen.

**Boris:** You have to evaluate the position correctly and realize when fruit are ripe for the picking. White's position is bad, and as the Russian saying goes: *"It is impossible to make an omelet without breaking eggs."* Therefore, Black has to exchange his excellent knight on e5 for White's passive bishop on d3 with 27...♘xd3!, though the continuation is different from the one you considered. Let's see what happens in the game.

**27...♘xd3! 28 cxd3 fxe4**

Not 28...♕f6 as you intended.

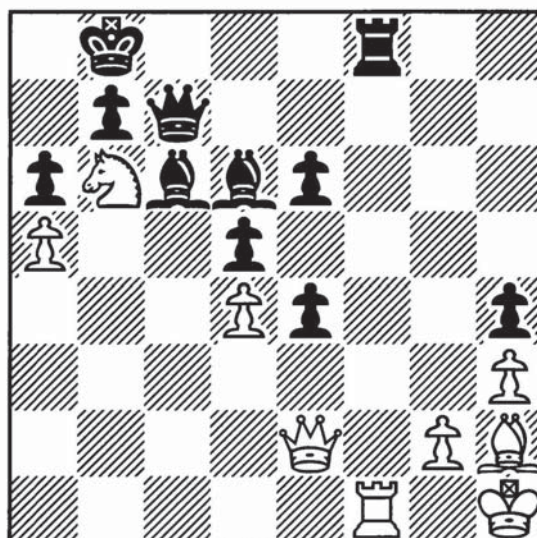
**29 d4!**

In the case of 29 dxe4 e5, Black wins the e4-pawn, after which White is unable to protect the g2-square. Instead, my opponent tries to blockade the position, hoping to keep the black bishops at bay. The next stage of the game is typical for Soviet tournaments in those years, when to win a won game you had to overcome fierce resistance.

**29...♖f5! 30 ♖c1 ♖gf8 31 ♕e3 ♖xf2 32 ♕xf2 d5 33 ♕g1!**

White has to sacrifice a second pawn, even though it allows Black to exchange dark-squared bishops. After 33 ♕e1 ♗d6! 34 ♕d2 ♕d8, White would again be unable to protect the h2-square sufficiently; e.g. 35 ♕e3 ♕c7 36 ♕g1 ♕b5 37 ♗h5 ♗g3 and White is paralyzed.

**33...♕xb4 34 ♕h2 ♕d6 35 ♖f1**

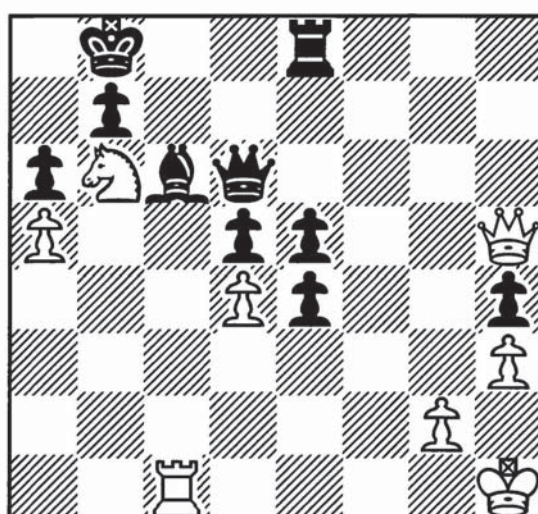


**Exercise:** To exchange rooks or not? (difficulty level 3)

*Joel:* My intuition tells me that exchanging rooks is bad in that it gives White too many opportunities, so I would play 35...Rg8.

*Boris:* Very good! There exists a rule that when you have a material advantage, exchange pieces – but here such an exchange gives White chances because of the weakness of Black's back rank. Therefore, it is important to protect the eighth rank and keep rooks on the board. In the game I played 35...Re8, with the idea of ...e6-e5 at some moment, but the important part of this exercise is not exchanging rooks.

35...Re8! 36 Qxd6 Rxd6 37 Rh5 e5 38 Rc1



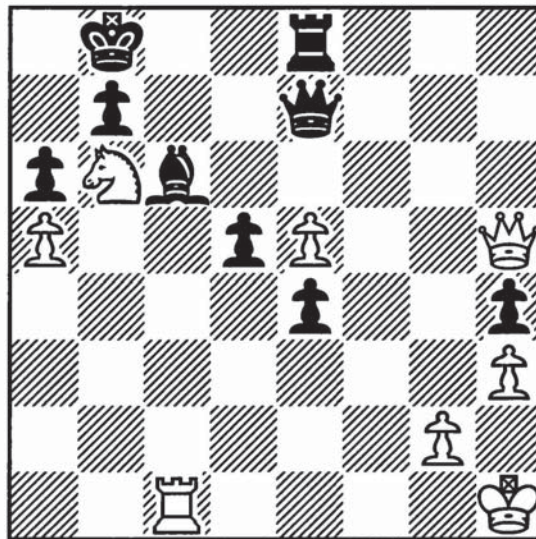
**Exercise:** What would you play here? (difficulty level 1)



*Joel:* White is threatening 39 ♖xe8+ ♗xe8 40 ♖c8+ and mate next move, so I guess I would simply play something like 38...♖f8.

*Boris:* That hangs the e5-pawn, but the important part of the tactical exercise was to see White's trick. 38...♗e7, as played in the game, is stronger because it protects against the trick and covers e5.

**38...♗e7 39 dxe5**



*Exercise:* What would you play this time? (difficulty level 3)

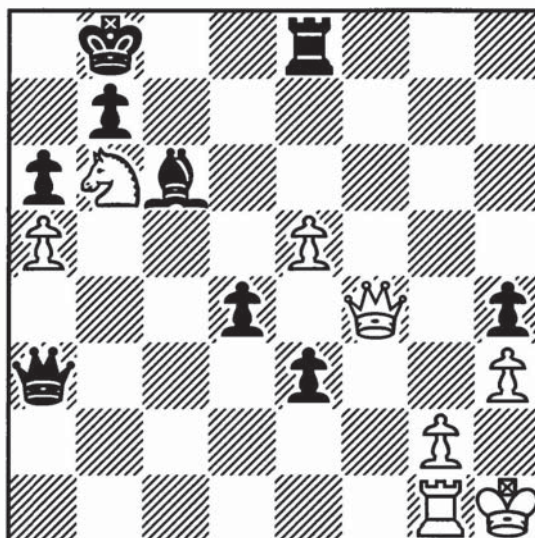
*Joel:* If 39...♗xe5? 40 ♗xe5! ♖xe5 41 ♖xc6, so I would play 39...d4, getting my two connected passed pawns rolling.

*Boris:* You saw the trick, very good. I played 39...e3 in the game, which is more resolute, since the e-pawn is closer to becoming a queen than the d-pawn. As it turns out, you could permit White's trick because, in the end, Black is winning; i.e. 39...♗xe5 40 ♗xe5 ♖xe5 41 ♖xc6 bxc6 42 ♖d7+ ♗c7 43 ♖xe5 c5 44 ♖g1 c4 45 ♖f2 c3 and the pawns supported by the king will win. Over the board, however, it is better not to allow such possibilities; 39...e3 is simpler.

**39...e3! 40 ♗f3 ♗a3! 41 ♖g1**

White already doesn't have a defense. If 41 ♖c2 then 41...♗a1+ 42 ♖h2 ♗xe5+, followed by 43...e2, and Black wins.

**41...d4 42 ♗f4**

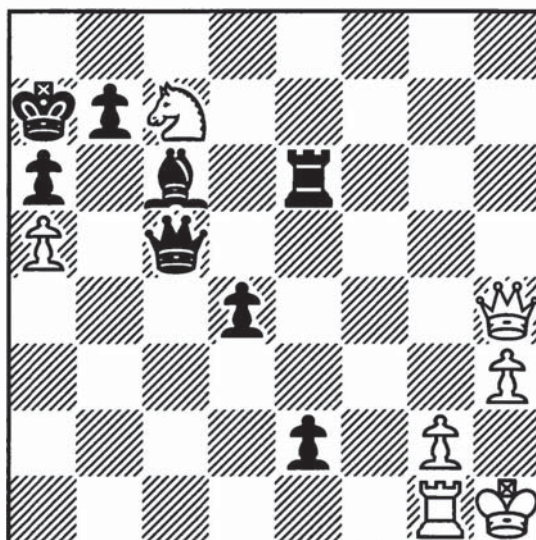


**Exercise:** How would you utilize the advantages of your position? (difficulty level 2)

*Joel:* I would play 42...e2, threatening ...♙xh3+, and not fearing 43 e6+.

*Boris:* Good.

**42...e2! 43 e6+ ♔a7 44 ♙xh4 ♖xe6 45 ♘d5 ♚c5 46 ♘c7**



**Exercise:** How would you finish things off? (difficulty level 1)

*Joel:* I would play 46...♙xg2+.

*Boris:* Right.

**46...♙xg2+! 47 ♔xg2 ♖g6+ 48 ♔h1 ♚c6+ 0-1**

This kind of position with opposite side castling explains why Alekhine called the Sicil-

ian a Russian duel. It will become even more understandable after the next game.

*Joel:* I liked the idea of having to break eggs to make an omelet. *When the time is right, you have to go for it and have confidence in your position and tactical resources.*

The next game comes from the last round of a tournament in Amsterdam. I was a full point behind Chandler, who was in the lead and just needed a draw. The tournament situation explains my choice of defense – the Sicilian. This game is interesting from the perspective of psychology. *When Black needs to win and White is happy with a draw, the first player can make mistakes in risky moments by virtue of his inclination toward safer continuations.*

*Game 25*  
**M.Chandler-B.Gulko**  
OHRA Tournament, Amsterdam 1987  
*Sicilian Defense*

**1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 d4 cxd4 4 ♘xd4 ♘f6 5 ♘c3 d6 6 ♙g5 ♜b6 7 ♘b3**

By this time, I knew that the move 7 ♙e3! was very dangerous for Black but I hoped, because of the tournament situation, that my opponent would not go in for the very unclear and tactical complications that arise from it and instead choose a quieter continuation.

**7...e6 8 ♙e2**

The plan with ♜d2 and 0-0-0 is more challenging, but as we have discussed, Chandler wanted to play more safely.

**8...a6 9 0-0 ♙e7 10 ♙xf6**

White has to play this if he wants Black to recapture with the pawn. If he plays 10 ♖h1 first, then Black has 10...♜c7!, when he protects d6 and can answer ♙xf6 with ...♙xf6.

**10...gxf6 11 ♖h1**

The game I.Bondarevsky-M.Botvinnik, USSR Championship, Moscow 1951, proved that a very annoying plan for Black in such positions is if White places his bishop on h5 and proceeds to push his f-pawn. That plan is not immediately promising here because Black can bring his knight to c4; i.e. 11 ♙h5 ♘e5 12 ♜e2 ♙d7 13 ♖h1 ♜c8 14 f4 ♘c4 with good counterplay. So, before playing his bishop to h5, White has to take control of the e5-square.

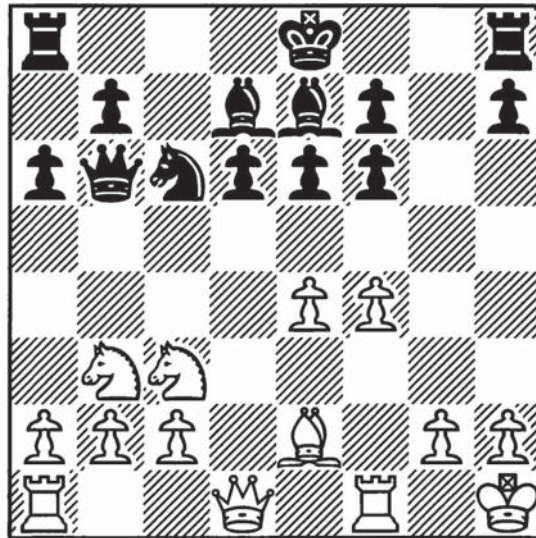
**11...♙d7 12 f4**

12 ♙h5 is still not appealing because Black has 12...♘e5!, heading for c4.

*Joel:* Why is it so important to get there?

*Boris:* With a knight on c4, a number of important squares in White's camp become vulnerable, such as b2, e3, and c3. For example, if White defends b2 with his rook, Black can play ...♜c8, threatening ...♘xb2, because White's knight on c3 is hanging. In other words, with a knight on c4, Black takes over the initiative.



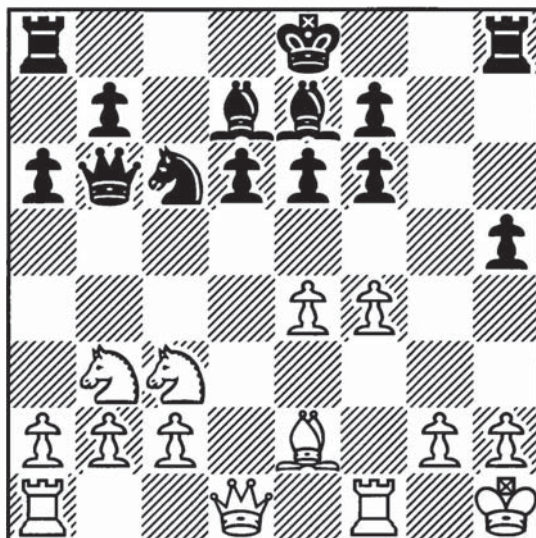


**Exercise:** What does Black have to play here? (difficulty level 5)

*Joel:* From what you said, I would play 12...h5.

*Boris:* That is absolutely correct! Now that White has taken control of e5, he is ready to play  $\text{♙h5}$  with a stable advantage (e.g. 12...♖c8? 13  $\text{♙h5}$ !).

**12...h5!**



**Exercise:** What should White do? (difficulty level 4)

*Joel:* I know what not to do – White shouldn't take the pawn – but I don't know what he should do.

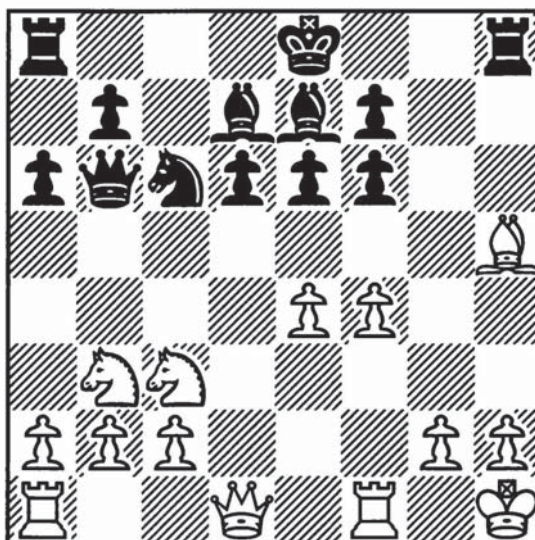
*Boris:* It is important that you have a feeling for when not to take the pawn. A move that

doesn't open the h-file for Black, such as 13 ♖f3 or 13 a4, would have been better.

**13 ♖xh5?!**

*Joel:* It seems to me that Chandler took the riskier path.

*Boris:* I don't think it was risky, I think he estimated the position imprecisely. *In this kind of position, the factor of the open h-file outweighs the extra pawn.*



**Exercise:** What should Black play? (difficulty level 3)

*Joel:* I think I would castle here. Even though it sacrifices a second pawn, I would be able to bring my other rook over to the open files on the kingside.

*Boris:* 13...0-0-0 14 ♖xf7 doesn't look good because White can bring his bishop back to g6 and play f4-f5. It is difficult in such a situation (when you have just sacrificed material) to play quietly, but the correct move is 13...♖h7, simply protecting f7, preparing ...0-0-0, and making it possible for Black to double rooks on the h-file.

**13...♖h7! 14 a4 0-0-0 15 a5 ♖c7**

This is preferable to 15...♖a7 because it prevents the maneuvers ♖d2-c4-b6 or ♖a4-b6, both of which would now leave the a5-pawn hanging.

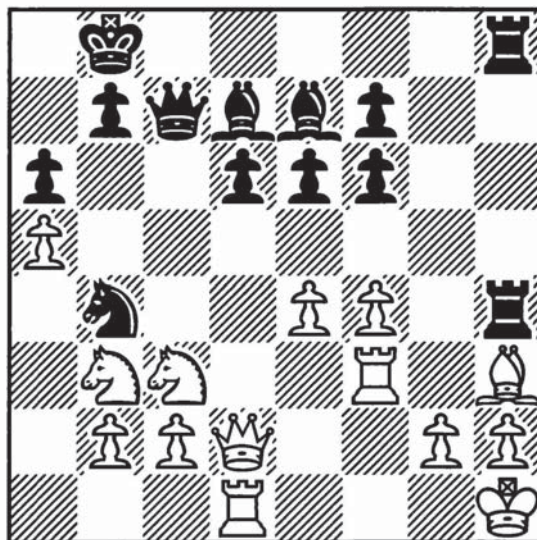
**16 ♖g4?!**

White decides to protect the h2-pawn by placing his bishop on h3 via g4. The drawback is that the bishop on h3 is vulnerable to a potential exchange sacrifice. It was better to play 16 h3!? and put the bishop on f3.

**16...♖g8! 17 ♖h3?! ♖b8 18 ♖f3 ♖b4 19 ♖e2 ♖gh8!**

Now the idea of sacrificing the exchange on h3 becomes more obvious. 19...♖c6? would have been premature due to 20 ♖d4, since Black's bishop is too valuable a piece to be exchanged for the knight.

**20 ♖d1 ♖h4 21 ♖d2**



**Exercise:** How should Black continue? (difficulty level 4)

**Joel:** I want to try and take advantage of the pin on the bishop on h3, or open the game up for the bishop pair on the diagonals. 21...e5 would be bad because of 22 f5, but 21...d5 looks interesting to me. I didn't really calculate variations, it just feels like the right way to go.

**Boris:** That is an interesting alternative and not worse than what I played with the same idea of opening the position.

**21...f5! 22 ♘d4**

After 22 exf5!?, play becomes very sharp: 22...♙c6 23 ♘d4! ♙xf3! 24 ♘xf3 ♖xh3 25 gxh3 ♙c6 26 ♙g2 ♘xc2 with an unclear position that is difficult to evaluate.

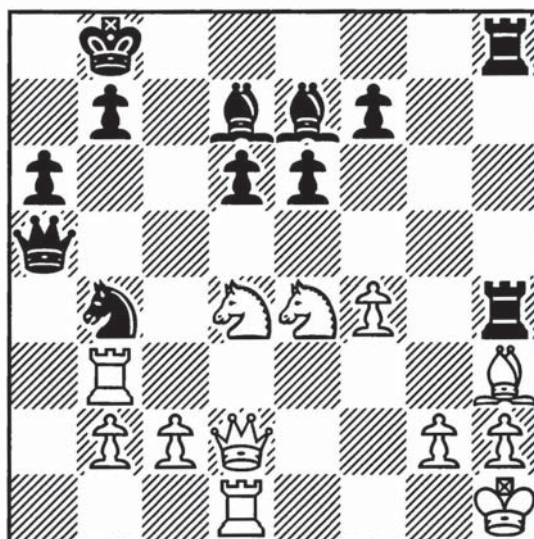
The immediate 23...♖xh3 was worse due to 24 ♖xh3! ♖xh3 25 ♘ce2! and suddenly Black's knight is in trouble.

**Joel:** What about 25...♘d5 - ?

**Boris:** Then 26 ♘xc6+ ♙xc6 27 ♘d4, followed by gxh3, and Black doesn't have compensation for the exchange.

**22...fxe4 23 ♘xe4 ♙xa5 24 ♖b3**

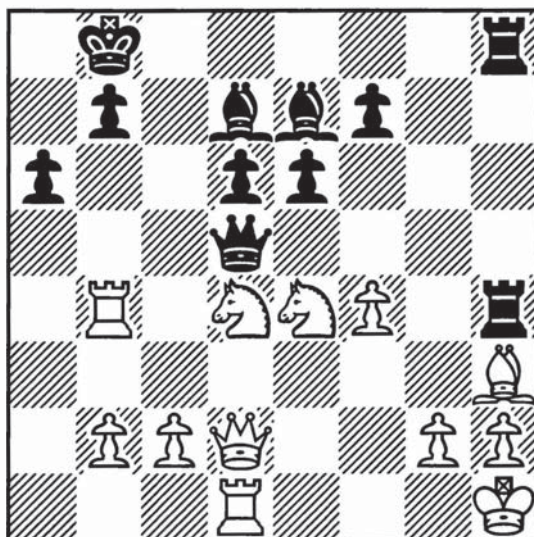




**Exercise:** What should Black play here? (difficulty level 3)

*Joel:* 24...d5 would solve the problem of the hanging knight but ruin Black's position. Instead, 24...♔d5 counterattacks nicely because, after 25 ♖xb4, Black can take on e4 and the b7-pawn is protected.

*Boris:* Correct, but 25 ♖xb4 is not the important continuation. 25 ♖xb4 is far more critical.



**Exercise:** What would you do now? (difficulty level 3)

*Joel:* I would play 25...♔xe4.

*Boris:* That loses to 26 ♘f5, attacking queen and rook. Black has to play 25...♖xh3! 26

gxf3 ♖xe4+ 27 ♖g2 ♖xg2+ 28 ♔xg2 e5! 29 ♘f3 ♙xh3+ 30 ♔g3 ♙f5, when his position is very pleasant. With two bishops, two passed pawns in the center, and a vulnerable white king, Black has very good prospects.

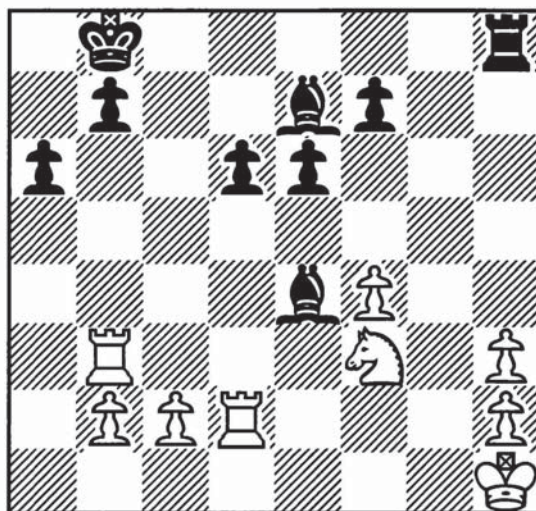
**24...♗d5! 25 ♘f3!? ♙xh3!?**

As we have seen, this natural exchange sacrifice was the main idea of Black's strategy. If I were a computer or had had more time, I would have calculated 25...♗xd2! 26 ♘exd2 ♙xf4 27 g3 ♙a4! 28 ♙xe6 fxe6 29 gxf4 ♘xc2! 30 ♖c3 ♙f6 31 ♖c4 ♘e3 with a winning end-game. The game continuation is much more complicated. Humans tend to get stuck on particular ideas and plans and have a harder time seeing different ones that occasionally and suddenly arise during a game. This is one of the big advantages of computers, who have no memory or desire.

**26 gxf3 ♖xe4 27 ♖xb4 ♙c6!**

Much more precise than 27...♖xb4?! 28 ♙xb4 ♙c6 29 ♔g2, when White's position isn't so bad.

**28 ♖xe4 ♙xe4 29 ♖d2**



**Exercise:** Which move do you consider to be most promising for Black? (difficulty level 3)

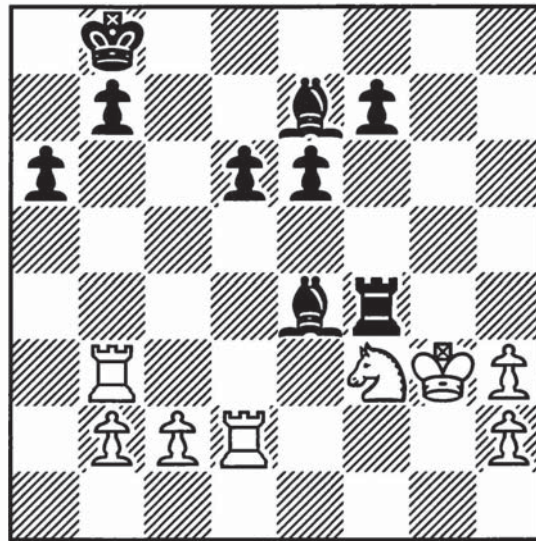
**Joel:** If 29...♙xh3 immediately, then 30 ♔g2 comes with tempo and Black has to retreat. I don't think trying to keep the king in the corner with 29...♙g8 works after 30 ♖g2. So I think I would play 29...♙h4.

**Boris:** Correct! The pawn on f4 is more valuable than the one on h3.

**Joel:** When I was thinking about the position I wasn't considering the difference in the relative values of the h- and f-pawns. Can you say something about this?

**Boris:** To maintain the initiative, Black needs to attack White's weak pawns, and by removing the f4-pawn, Black obtains two passed pawns. Winning the h3-pawn is of no strategic value.

29...♖h4! 30 ♔g2 ♜xf4 31 ♔g3



*Exercise:* What should Black play? (difficulty level 3)

*Joel:* I guess I would play 31...e5.

*Boris:* That's exactly what I did! It looks very natural, but it's a serious mistake. The rook doesn't have room to operate on f4, so the right move is 31...♜f6!. Then play would continue 32 h4 ♜g6+ 33 ♘g5 (or 33 ♔f4 f5, followed by ...e6-e5) 33...♙c6 34 ♔f4 e5+ 35 ♔e3 (or 35 ♔f5 ♙d7+ 36 ♔e4 f5+) 35...f5 and Black is winning.

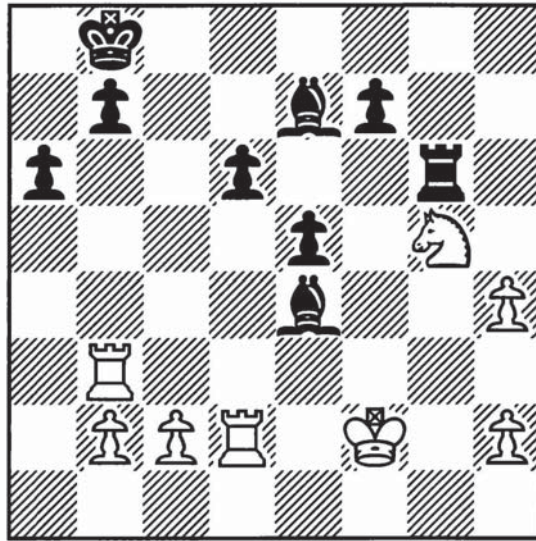
At this point in the game, both players were in serious time trouble and used mainly their intuition and feeling for the position rather than calculation. Now, using computers, I can see that our feelings were not always correct.

**31...e5? 32 h4 ♜f6**

At this moment I realized that my rook was losing its mobility. The natural 32...f5? was bad because, after 33 h3, Black's rook is severely restricted.

**33 ♘g5 ♜g6 34 ♔f2**





**34...♙xg5?!**

This move was the result of time shortage and overestimating the strength of my passed pawns. Stronger was 34...♙c6! 35 ♖g3! (35 ♜f3 f5 is bad for White) 35...♞h6 36 ♔g1! (better than 36 ♜f3 e4 or 36 ♞g4 f5) 36...♙d8!.

*Joel:* And White will lose his knight if he takes on f7 because of ...♙b6+ and ...♞f6+.

*Boris:* Right.

**35 hxg5 ♞xg5 36 ♞xd6 ♞g2+ 37 ♔e3 f5 38 ♞d2?!**

Chandler, like me, overestimated the strength of Black's passed pawns. Instead, after 38 ♞xa6! (better than 38 ♞e6 ♙d5 39 ♞e8+ ♔a7 40 ♞b4 f4+ 41 ♔d3 ♞g5, when Black preserves his winning chances) 38...♙d5 39 ♞b4 f4+ 40 ♔d3, White has good prospects of a draw.

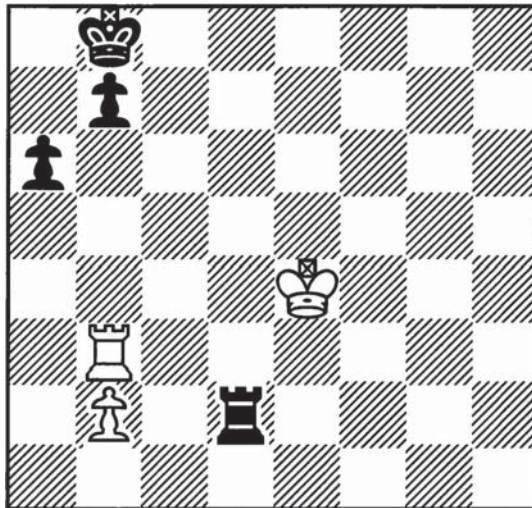
**38...f4+ 39 ♔xe4 ♞xd2 40 ♔xe5?!**

White's chances for an escape now were tied to his h-pawn, so it was better to begin pushing it at once with 40 h4 ♞xc2 41 ♞h3!. The logic is that, with the h-pawn, White's king in the center is very strong; whereas without the h-pawn, as in the game, the king is too far from the queenside where it will be needed for defense.

**40...♞xc2 41 ♔xf4?**

He could have maintained some drawing chances with 41 h4! ♞h2 (after 41...f3? 42 ♞xf3 ♞xb2 43 ♞h3, White's h-pawn saves him) 42 ♔xf4 ♞xh4+ 43 ♔e5! ♞c4 44 ♔d5, when the white king is cut off from his b-pawn by only one file.

**41...♞xh2 42 ♔e4 ♞d2**



Here White's king is cut off by two files, which makes the winning task easy. The exchange of rooks is lethal for him, so Black will just slowly improve the position of his king and pawns, while White is powerless to do anything.

**43 ♖e3 ♜d6 44 ♖e4 ♜d2 45 ♖e3 ♜d7 46 ♜c3 ♖a7 47 ♖e2**

Now Black's king can move forward. The attempt to prevent this by 47 ♜b3 would be met by 47...♜d6, followed by ...♜b6, when Black can continue improving his position.

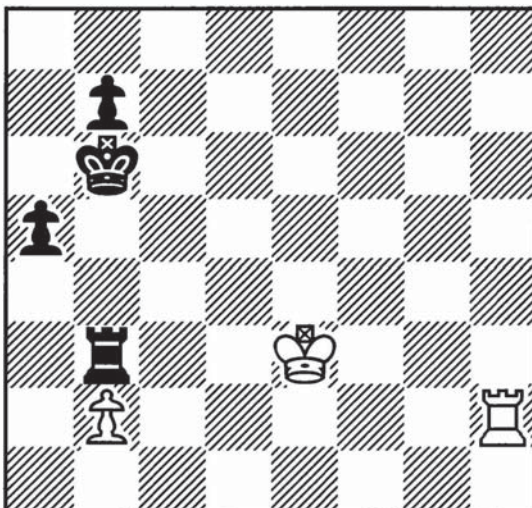
**47...♖b6 48 ♜c4 ♜d5! 49 ♖e3**

If White tries to prevent the black king from penetrating, he will lose by exactly one tempo: 49 b3 ♜b5 50 ♜c3 ♖a5 51 ♖d3 ♖b4 52 ♖c2 ♜c5. Now you see the difference between White's king being cut off by two files as opposed to one file.

*Joel:* I guess if it was only one file, White's king would be in time.

*Boris:* I might have other ways of making progress, but his drawing chances would certainly improve.

**49...a5 50 ♜h4 ♜b5! 51 ♜h2 ♜b3+!**



Now I switch from cutting off White's king by files to cutting it off by ranks. The rest is simple.

**52 ♖d4 ♖b5 53 ♜h7 b6 54 ♜h2 ♖b4 55 ♜h6 b5 56 ♜h2 a4 57 ♖d5 ♜g3 58 ♖c6 ♜g6+ 59 ♖d5 ♜g5+ 60 ♖d4**

60 ♖c6 ♖b3 was no better for White.

**60...♖b3 61 ♜f2 b4 62 ♜h2 ♜g4+ 63 ♖c5 ♖a2 64 ♖b5 b3 65 ♖c5 a3 66 bxa3+ ♖xa3 67 ♜h8 b2 0-1**

After the game, Efim Geller told me “It looks like your opponent didn’t know that he had not to take the pawn.” I had to confess that I didn’t know that either, because winning the h-pawn doesn’t expose White to immediate threats. Classical players such as Geller, Botvinnik, Smyslov, Alekhine, Keres – the players we learned from – knew much more about chess than we did.

When White doesn’t want to take the risk associated with the Open Sicilian, they can turn to more strategic options (such as the Rossolimo or Closed Sicilian) which we will consider in the next two games. The game before us was interesting both from the perspective of the opening and because of the positional pawn sacrifice played, where I received subtle compensation that is not easy to formalize. Of course, I am not the only person to think so. Bronstein wrote in his classic book *Zurich International Chess Tournament, 1953* (notes to Taimanov-Gligoric, rd.17): “The sacrifice of a pawn for the initiative is one of the most complex problems of chess strategy – and perhaps of its psychology as well. The positions that occur as the result of a sacrifice are so varied that no generalizations can possibly be made.”

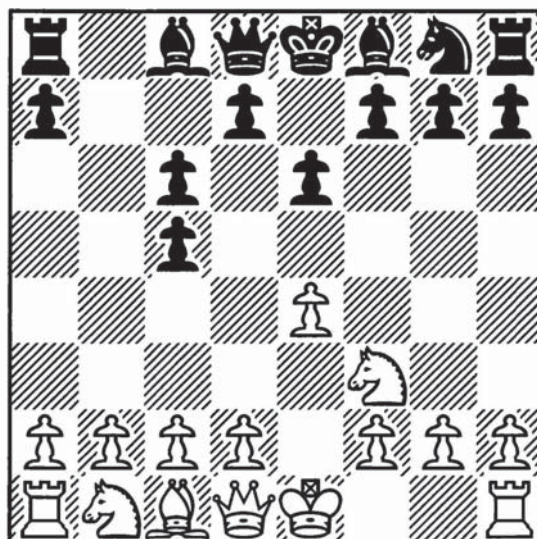
*Game 26*  
**G.Uusi-B.Gulko**  
USSR 1977  
*Sicilian Defense*

*Joel:* Can you say something about your opponent?

*Boris:* He was one of the strongest masters in Estonia and at one time Moscow Champion, because he studied in Moscow. He ended up not playing very much because he became a very successful engineer.

**1 e4 c5 2 ♘f3 ♘c6 3 ♙b5 e6 4 ♙xc6 bxc6**





## 5 0-0

Years after this game was played, it was found that 5 0-0 significantly reduces White's chances to fight for the initiative. The most promising continuations are 5 d3 and 5 b3.

On 5 b3, Gelfand played the immediate 5...e5!? in his 2012 World Championship match against Anand, while Topalov has played 5...d5!?. But if Black continues as I do in the game with 5...♘e7, then after 6 ♙b2 ♘g6, White has the strong 7 h4! as Mickey Adams played against Shirov at Reykjavik 2003.

The other popular line nowadays is 5 d3 ♘e7, when White can play for the initiative with 6 h4!? or 6 ♘g5!?. All these possibilities disappear after the immediate 5 0-0. These examples show that *the old advice of castling as soon as you can is now outdated*.

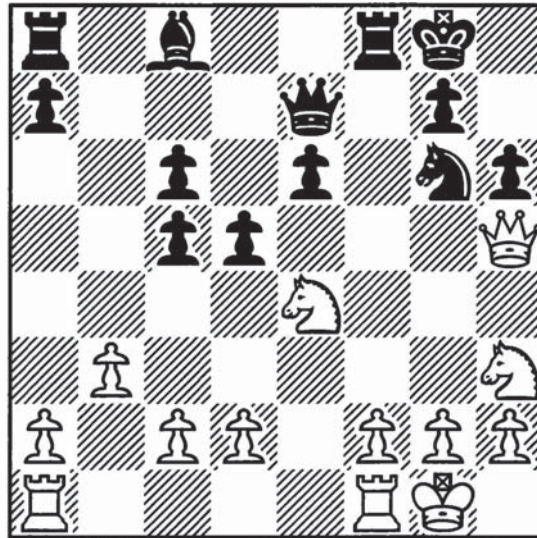
**5...♘e7 6 b3 ♘g6 7 ♙b2 f6 8 e5**

This was a novelty at the time. Previously, I had faced 8 d4 cxd4 9 ♘xd4 ♙e7 10 c4 0-0 11 ♘c3 ♚c7 12 ♚d2 a6 13 ♚ad1 ♙b7 14 f4 ♚ad8 15 ♘de2 f5, when Black obtained a good game in V.Savon-B.Gulko, Vilnius Zonal 1975.

**8...♙e7 9 exf6 ♙xf6**

The most natural continuation, but I think it's more challenging, albeit more risky, to play 9...gxf6!?, when Black plans to build a big center.

**10 ♙xf6 ♚xf6 11 ♘c3 0-0 12 ♘e4 ♚e7 13 ♘fg5! h6 14 ♘h3 d5 15 ♚h5**



**Exercise:** What would you play here? (difficulty level 5)

*Joel:* I guess I would play 15...♘f4, trading off a pair of knights. I'm not sure what to do about my bishop, but I'd like to double rooks on the f-file. Maybe the bishop needs to be on d7 for a while, otherwise the e-pawn will fall under too much pressure.

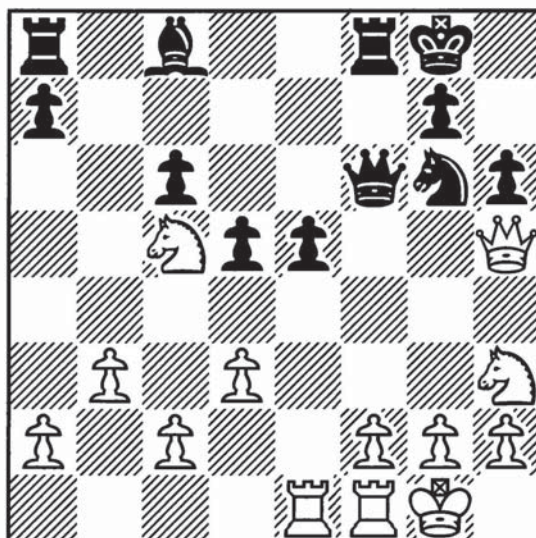
*Boris:* After 15...♘f4 16 ♘xf4 ♙xf4 17 ♘g3, Black has to defend an inferior position because White gets rid of his misplaced knight on h3, while Black doesn't have an active plan that would compensate for his pawn structure. He perhaps can play for equality, though definitely no more than that.

Black should try to make use of the misplaced white knight, but the attempt to keep it there with 15...♘h4 allows 16 ♘eg5! e5 (not 16...♘f5? 17 ♙g6! and Black is losing) 17 ♙xh4 ♘xh3 18 ♙xh3 hxg5 and White is better because Black's pawns can become weak. Instead, Black can sacrifice a pawn in order to keep his very important knight on g6 on the board and White's restricted knight on h3. Now Black has an active plan to increase the pressure on the kingside.

**15...♙f7! 16 ♘xc5 e5**

White's knight occupies a seemingly good position on c5, but because it's not coordinated with the efforts of his other pieces, the knight is effectively useless. And White's queen and knight on the h-file are negatively coordinated. By which I mean that the queen cannot leave the h5-square because she has to protect the knight on h3.

**17 ♙ae1 ♙f6 18 d3?!**



**Exercise:** How can Black develop his initiative? (difficulty level 4)

*Joel:* I don't see anything other than 18...a5, aiming to create counterplay on the queen-side.

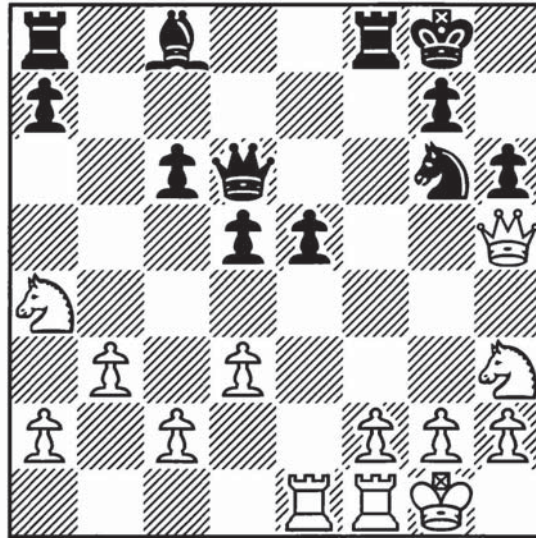
*Boris:* That is not a bad positional move in itself, but it's not part of a consistent plan. In other words, it isn't clear what you will do next. I think 18...♔d6 is better, threatening to safeguard the g6-knight (with ...♕xh3 or ...♖f5) and then take on c5, while simultaneously vacating the f-file so the rook can operate.

White would have done better to prepare the support of the c5-knight with 18 c3!, intending d2-d4. In that case, however, Black has 18...♘h4, threatening to take on h3.

**18...♔d6! 19 ♘a4**

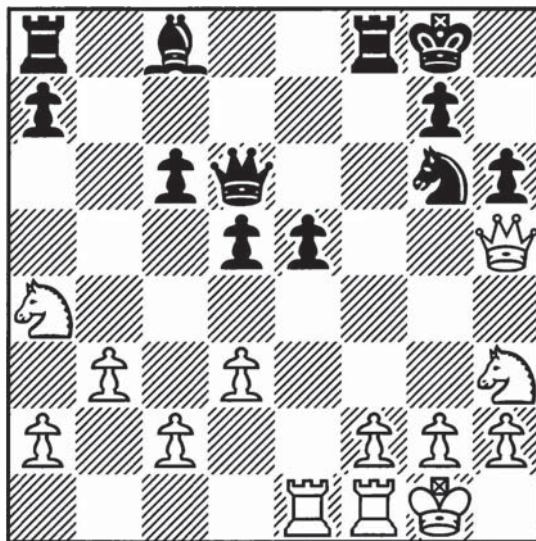
The attempt to solve White's problems tactically with 19 d4?! exd4 20 ♘e6 is met by 20...♕xe6 21 ♔xg6 ♖f6 and Black is better; while if White protects the knight with 19 b4, play continues 19...a5 20 a3 axb4 21 axb4 ♖a2 and Black obtains the initiative. As a result of these considerations, White is forced to withdraw his knight from the center.





**Exercise:** What would you play here? (difficulty level 3)

*Joel:* I first looked at 19...♖f5 but didn't see how it really furthered my cause, because White could simply play 20 ♖e2 ♜f6 21 ♗h5 and Black still hasn't figured out where to put his bishop, nor how to get his other rook into the game. So I came up with 19...♜b8, considering that the bishop is already doing a good job from c8, and Black can follow up with ...♜b4, threatening ...♙g4, trapping the queen. I remember William Lombardy telling me, at the old Chess Shop on Thompson Street in New York City, that bishops are developed on their home squares, so that was part of my thinking.



*Boris:* Switching the rook from f8 to f6 via 19...♜f5 actually gains an important tempo. After the game continuation, Black releases the queen from protecting the knight on g6 and is ready to double rooks. Your suggestion of 19...♜b8 is interesting, but White can pre-

vent 20...♖b4 by playing 20 c3, or else restrict the rook after its arrival on b4 by playing c2-c4.

**19...♖f5 20 ♕d1 ♖f6 21 ♖e3**

Despite the wasted tempo, it was probably preferable to return the queen with 21 ♕h5, after which Black could choose between your idea of 21...♖b8!? and ...♖b4 (when ...♙g4 and ...♖h4 are threats) or simply 21...♙d7!?, followed by ...♖af8, which is more promising.

**21...♙d7 22 d4 ♖af8**

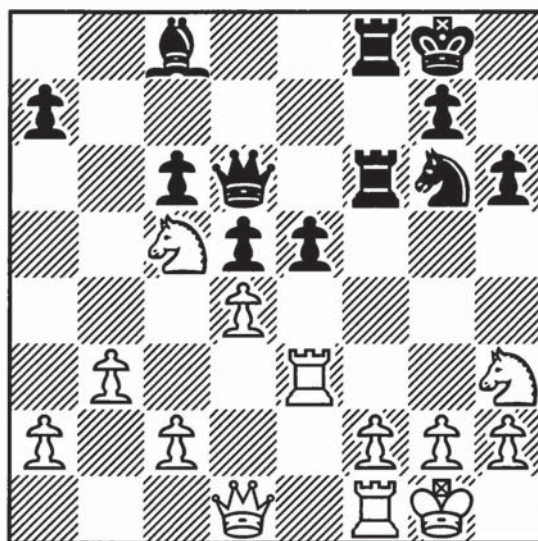
*Joel:* What about 22...e4, releasing the tension on the e-pawn? That's what I would be inclined to play.

*Boris:* I first improve the position of my pieces and then take care of pawns. Of course, before playing 22...♖af8, you have to evaluate whether White has 23 dxe5.

**23 ♘c5!?**

White can't try and ease the pressure by returning the pawn with 23 dxe5 ♘xe5 (threatening ...♘f3+) 24 f4, because after 24...♙xh3 25 ♖xh3 ♖xf4, Black's position is much better.

**23...♙c8!**



*Joel:* So I was justified in my confusion about what to do with the bishop, which is well placed on its home square after all, as Lombardy said. You lost a tempo in retreating it to c8 again but were able to double rooks in the meantime. It seems you used the tempo you gained on White's queen to good effect. It allowed you, in some way, to set up your ideal position.

*Boris:* Correct.

**24 c3**

Now 24 dxe5 ♘xe5 is even worse on the previous move, since if 25 ♕d4 then 25...♘f3+ and Black is winning.

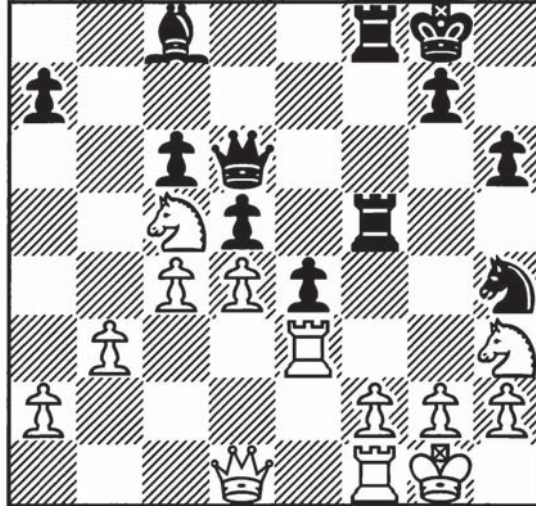
**24...e4! 25 ♕h5 ♖f5 26 ♕d1 ♘h4 27 c4**

In the case of 27 ♖g3, the quiet move 27...♖5f6 would be extremely unpleasant for



White, due to the threat of 28...♘f5 29 ♖g4 ♘e3, winning.

Instead, 27 ♖h1 was more stubborn, when 27...♗f3!? seems very attractive, but White can defend after 28 gxf3 ♕xh3 29 ♖g1 exf3 30 ♖g3 ♕g2+ 31 ♖g1 ♘f5 32 ♖exf3 ♕xf3 33 ♖xf3. Stronger was 27...♗f5! 28 ♖h5 ♖e7 with permanent pressure for Black.

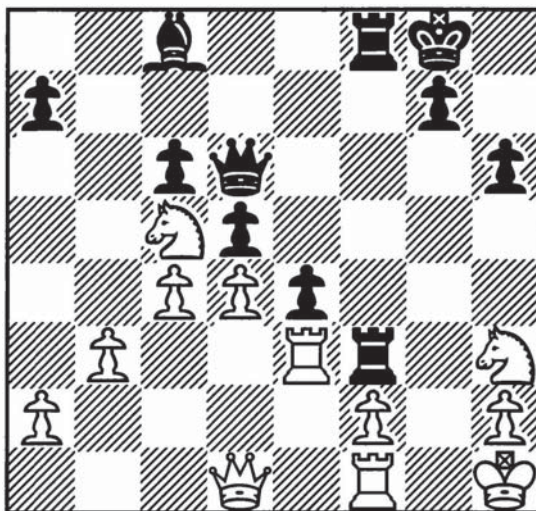


**Exercise:** What would you play now? (difficulty level 3)

**Joel:** I am putting something on f3, I just don't know whether it should be the knight or the rook. I have to calculate it.

**Boris:** You're right, both moves are good. I played 27...♘f3+, but perhaps 27...♗f3! is even stronger, when 28 ♖xf3 exf3 (or any other capture on f3) would win for Black.

27...♘f3+! 28 gxf3 ♖xf3 29 ♖h1



**Exercise:** Which piece should take on h3? (difficulty level 3)



**Joel:** I would take with the rook and after 30 ♖xh3 ♗xh3, Black will win the exchange. If White tries to avoid this, he will lose the f2-pawn with the threat of mate on h2.

**Boris:** Exactly the stupid move I played, which overlooks White's defense. Instead, after the correct 29...♗xh3 30 ♖g1 ♖xe3 31 fxe3 ♖f2, he cannot defend against mate on h2 with 32 ♖g3 because 32...♖f1+ wins the queen.

**29...♖xh3?! 30 ♖g3!**

Now the struggle continues; in order to win, Black has to play precisely.

**30...♖xg3 31 fxg3 ♗g4!**

Black chooses a forcing line; alternatively, 31...♗h3 was not worse.

**32 ♖e1**

If 32 ♖xf8+ ♖xf8 33 ♖e1, then 33...♖f3+ 34 ♔g1 ♗h3 and mate is inevitable.

**32...dxc4!**

Attacking d4.

**33 ♗xe4**

After 33 ♖xf8+ ♖xf8 34 ♗xe4 ♖f3+ 35 ♔g1 ♗h3, White is again defenseless.

**33...♖xf1+ 34 ♖xf1 ♖d5 35 ♖g2 0-1**

Here White lost on time, but he would have lost anyway. I was planning 35...♖xd4 36 h3 ♖d1+ 37 ♔h2 ♗f3 38 ♗f2 ♖e2 39 ♖g1 c3 and wins, while 36...♗f5 would win even faster.

Oleg Romanishin was one of the world's strongest grandmasters. Several months before the following game he tied with Tal for first place in the super tournament of sixteen grandmasters in Leningrad, ahead of World Champion Anatoly Karpov. He liked complicated positions and wasn't afraid of taking risks. This game was recognized as the most beautiful in the 1977 USSR Championship. I don't think it's particularly beautiful, but I do think it teaches us some important strategic ideas.

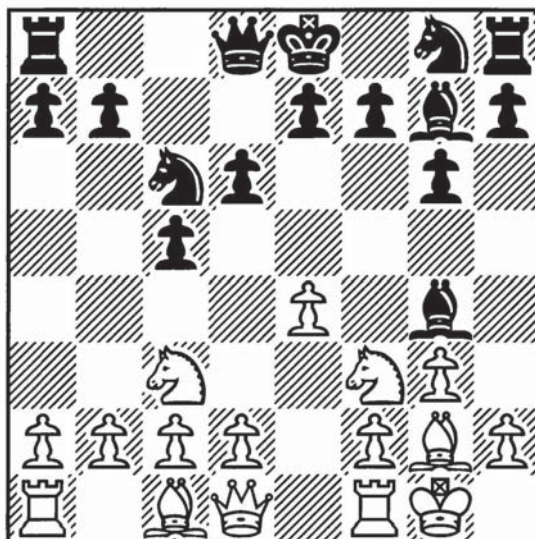
*Game 27*

**O.Romanishin-B.Gulko**

USSR Championship, Leningrad 1977

*Sicilian Defense*

**1 e4 c5 2 ♘c3 ♘c6 3 ♗f3 d6 4 g3 g6 5 ♗g2 ♗g7 6 0-0 ♗g4!**



This amusing plan of giving up the light-squared bishop for the knight was introduced, to the best of my knowledge, by Fischer in a similar position against Hort at Palma de Mallorca 1970. In that game, Fischer played an early ...a7-a6 and hadn't yet fianchettoed his dark-squared bishop, but in both cases Black's idea is to exchange bishop for knight, which gives him control of the e5- and d4-squares and, in the process, reduces White's attacking chances on the kingside. The idea became popular on account of Ulf Andersson, who used it successfully in the English (in similar positions with reversed colors).

**7 h3 ♗xf3 8 ♜xf3 e6!**

For Black it is important to restrict White's knight on c3 so that it cannot be redeployed to a more meaningful position. In the case of 8...♘f6 9 ♘d5!, White would rid himself of this awkward piece.

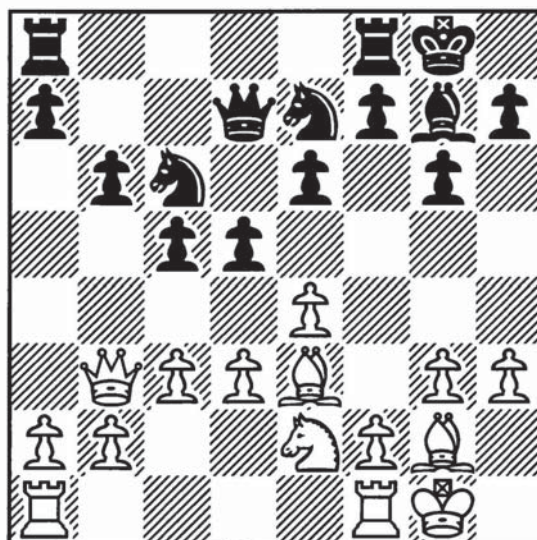
**9 ♘e2**

A more routine plan would be 9 ♜d1, followed by d2-d3 and f2-f4. My opponent decided to utilize his queen where it is on the third rank.

**9...♘ge7 10 ♜b3 0-0 11 c3**

White realized that taking the pawn would be bad, as after 11 ♜xb7 ♜a5 12 ♜b3 ♜fb8 13 ♜e3 ♗xb2 14 ♗xb2 ♜xb2, Black has the advantage.

**11...♜d7 12 d3 d5 13 ♗e3 b6! 14 ♜ad1**



**Exercise:** What would you play here? (difficulty level 4)

*Joel:* I think I would like to move my a8-rook somewhere, because in some cases the pin on the knight from the bishop on g2 can be annoying. Perhaps something like 14...♖ac8.

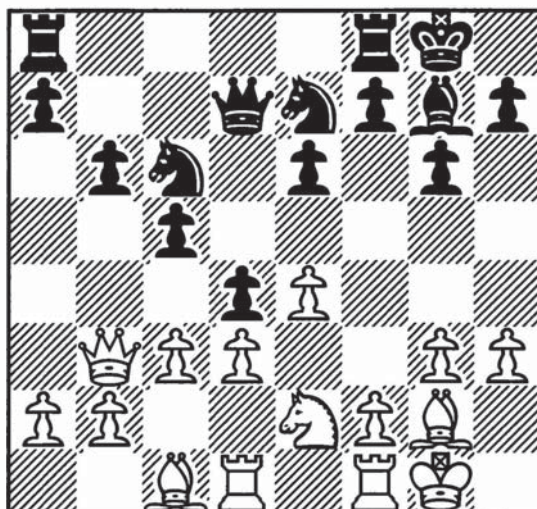
*Boris:* If Black plays 14...♖ac8, White has 15 d4 (which he prepared on the previous move) with a good game because he has managed to open the position for his bishops. The correct way for Black, therefore, is to prevent this by playing 14...d4! himself.

Now the logic behind Black's previous move 13...b6! becomes clear. The immediate 13...d4?! would have been premature, due to 14 cxd4 ♘xd4 15 ♘xd4 ♙xd4 16 ♙xd4 cxd4 17 e5 and White is better. Black needs to be able to recapture and occupy d4 with a piece, not a pawn. In this variation, he is unable to play 16...♙xd4 because the b7-pawn hangs with tempo; hence 13...b6, preparing to play 14...d4 next move.

**14...d4! 15 ♙c1**

Now after 15 cxd4 ♘xd4 and the exchange of minor pieces, Black will have the advantage because of the weakness on d4 and the backward pawn on d3.





**Exercise:** What is the logical continuation of the plan started with 13...b6 - ? (difficulty level 4)

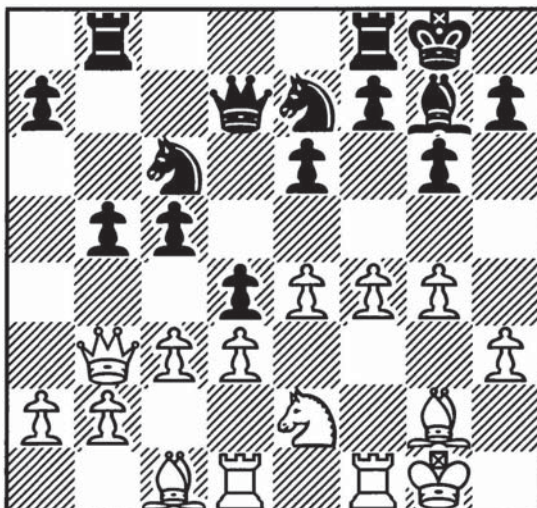
*Joel:* I think White is threatening to play 16 e5, so Black should either move the rook on a8 or play 15...e5. I think 15...e5 is more consistent with Black's plan to keep the position closed.

*Boris:* Black's chances are on the queenside, so your first instinct to move the rook is better, especially as White's pieces are not well placed to meet aggression in that sector of the board.

*Joel:* But how does that keep the position closed?

*Boris:* My plan was not to keep the position closed, but to not open it in White's favor! Now that I have prevented White from doing that, I can go ahead with my plan of playing on the queenside.

**15...♖ab8! 16 f4 b5 17 g4?!**



**Exercise:** How should Black execute his plan? (difficulty level 4)

**Joel:** I'm trying to figure out how to open the position on the queenside, but I don't know how exactly.

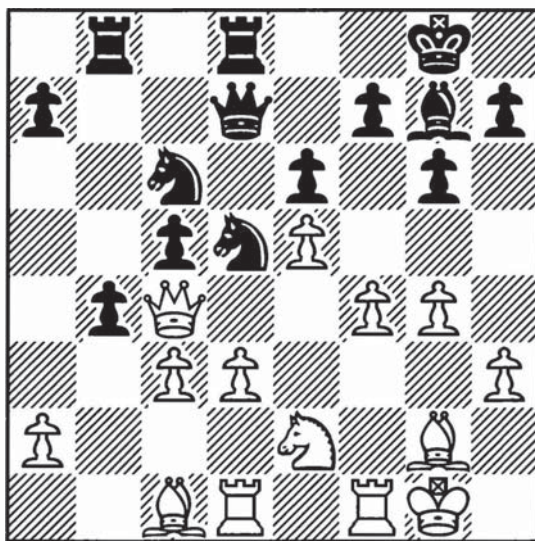
**Boris:** You're right that Black needs to open the queenside, and the way to do it is 17...dxc3 18 bxc3 b4.

**Joel:** I looked at that but I thought White could reply with 19 c4, keeping the position closed on that side of the board, and then play ♖b2, maintaining control of d4.

**Boris:** In that case, Black would occupy d4 immediately with 19...♘d4! 20 ♘xd4 ♙xd4+ 21 ♔h1 a5, keeping all his trumps in the position. White had to try and prevent Black's plan with 17 e5!? f6 18 exf6 ♙xf6; or even a move earlier with 16 c4!? b5 17 cxb5 ♘a5. In either case, though, Black's position would still be preferable.

**17...dxc3! 18 bxc3 b4 19 e5**

After 19 cxb4 ♘d4! 20 ♘xd4 ♙xd4+ 21 ♔h1 ♖xb4 22 ♜c2 ♖fb8, Black is clearly better. **19...♖fd8 20 ♜c4 ♘d5!**



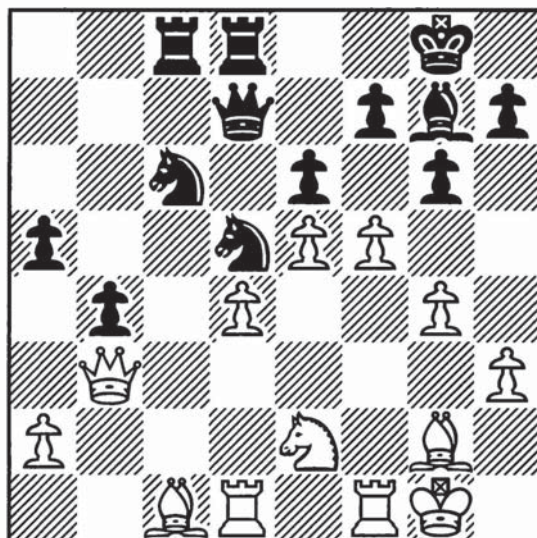
**21 cxb4**

My opponent didn't accept the pawn sacrifice because, after 21 ♜xc5 ♙f8 22 ♜c4 ♖dc8!, White is in great danger; for example, 23 ♙xd5 exd5 24 ♜a6 bxc3 25 ♘xc3 ♙b4! 26 ♘e2 ♘xe5! 27 fxe5 ♖b6 and White loses his queen.

**21...cxb4 22 d4 ♖bc8 23 ♜b3 a5!**

Black had an alternative way in 23...♘a5! 24 ♜b1 ♜a4 25 f5 ♘c3 26 ♘xc3 bxc3 27 ♜e4 c2, but the text was more straightforward.

**24 f5**



**Exercise:** What should Black do now? (difficulty level 4)

*Joel:* I would play 24...♖a7, putting pressure on d4, threatening ...♗xe5 or ...♕xe5, and preparing ...a5-a4.

*Boris:* That idea has its merits, but the move you prepared (...a5-a4) doesn't need further preparation. It can be played immediately.

**24...a4!? 25 ♖g3**

25 ♖xa4 would lose in view of 25...♗xd4! 26 ♖xd7 ♗xe2+ 27 ♔f2 ♖xd7 28 fxe6 fxe6 29 ♕xd5 ♖xd5 30 ♔xe2 ♖xe5+ and Black has a winning endgame; while if 30 ♖xd5 then 30...♗xc1 is decisive.

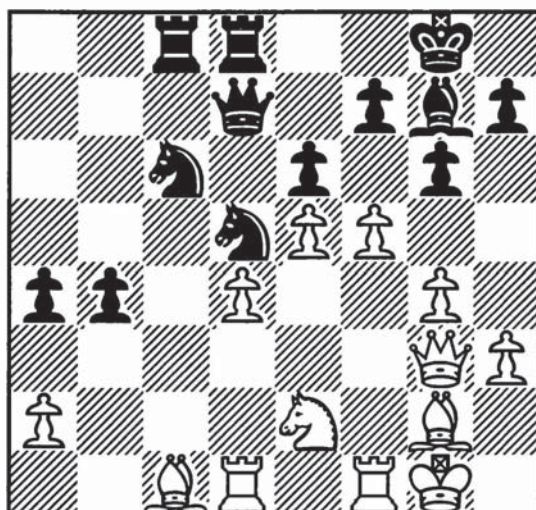
*Joel:* Is that so clear? You have two minor pieces for the rook, but the position seems pretty open to me.

*Boris:* I have two minor pieces for the rook and will probably pick up the a-pawn as well.

*Joel:* How so?

*Boris:* Well, if 31 ♖d2 then 31...♕h6 and he cannot hold onto the pawn.





**Exercise:** What would you play here? (difficulty level 4)

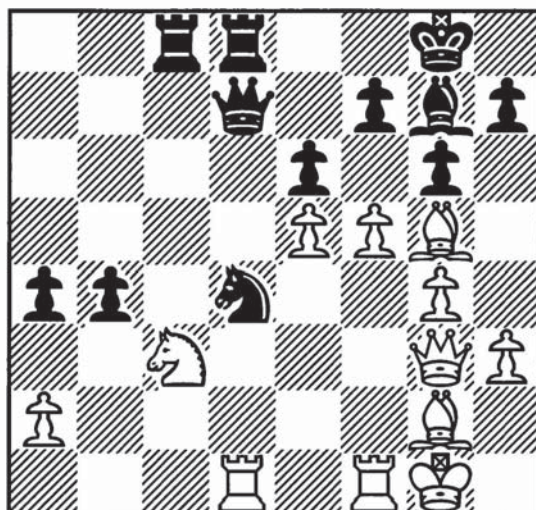
*Joel:* I want to play 25...♖c3.

*Boris:* And when he plays 26 ♜xc3, what did you have in mind?

*Joel:* 26...♜xd4!

*Boris:* Correct! That is how it went in the game. I could have played the combination a move earlier, but I thought that 24...a4 was a logical inclusion in my plan. Yes, it offered White the possibility of a more stubborn defense in 25 ♜d3! ♜c3!? (a strong alternative was 25...♜a7!? 26 ♞h1 b3 27 axb3 ♜cb4 28 ♜b5 a3 with dangerous threats) 26 ♜xc3 bxc3 27 ♜xc3 ♜xd4, but Black is still much better; for example, 28 ♜a5 ♜xc1 29 ♜xc1 ♜e2+ 30 ♞h1 ♜g3+ 31 ♞h2 ♜xf1+ 32 ♜xf1 ♜d4.

However, because of the possibility of 25 ♜d3, we have to come to the conclusion that the immediate 24...♜c3! was stronger than 24...a4. But I found this idea one move too late. **25...♜c3! 26 ♜xc3 ♜xd4 27 ♞g5**



## 27...♖xc3?!

This is an important psychological moment. Black could win quickly by playing 27...bxc3! and White cannot avoid big losses because, in addition to all his other problems, he now has to contend with a strong passed pawn; for example, 28 ♖de1 c2 and White doesn't have 29 ♕xd8 because of 29...c1♚ 30 ♖xc1 ♜e2+ etc.

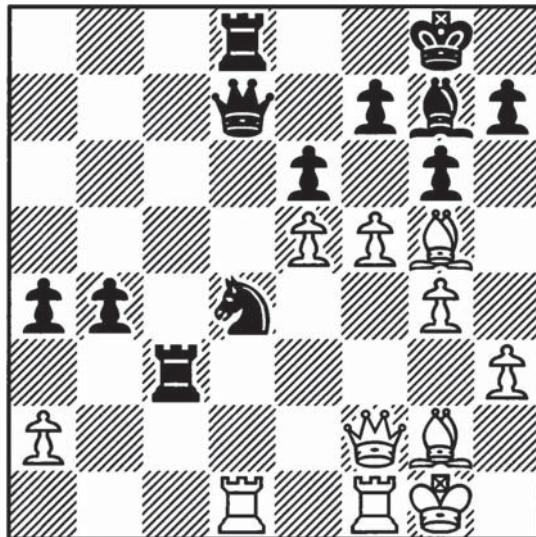
Instead, Black makes a typical mistake: *Having the advantage, I tried to hold on to my advantage by playing safely and missed the best continuation.*

**Joel:** This happens to me all the time. Can you give some advice about how to overcome this tendency?

**Boris:** You simply have to take lessons from your failures and try (as a result) not to diminish your advantage by playing cautiously in future games.

## 28 ♚f2

After 28 ♚e1 ♚a7! 29 ♜h1 ♖d7, Black has a decisive advantage.



**Exercise:** What would you play here? (difficulty level 4)

**Joel:** I'm not sure. I was looking at 28...♕xe5, sacrificing the exchange, but I'm not sure that's necessary. I also considered 28...♖c2 29 ♚e1 ♖e2, but I didn't know how to continue.

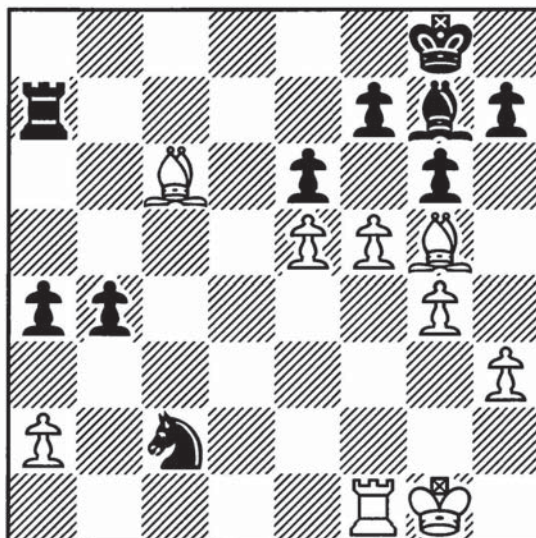
**Boris:** You're right to play 28...♖c2, attacking the queen; but after 29 ♚e1, Black has the simple 29...♖xg2+ 30 ♜xg2 ♚d5+, winning easily.

## 28...♖c2! 29 ♚xc2

In playing 28...♖c2 you also had to consider what to do after 29 ♚e3. Here Black can play 29...♚a7 30 ♜h1 (30 ♕xd8 loses the queen to 30...♜e2+ 31 ♜f2 ♜g1+!) 30...♖d7 and White's position is desperate. In this line, it would be more stubborn to play 30 fxe6 fxe6 31 ♜h1 ♖d7 32 ♚e4, when White has hopes of resisting. But transposing to an endgame gives him even better chances to escape.

## 29...♜xc2 30 ♖xd7 ♖xd7 31 ♕c6 ♖a7

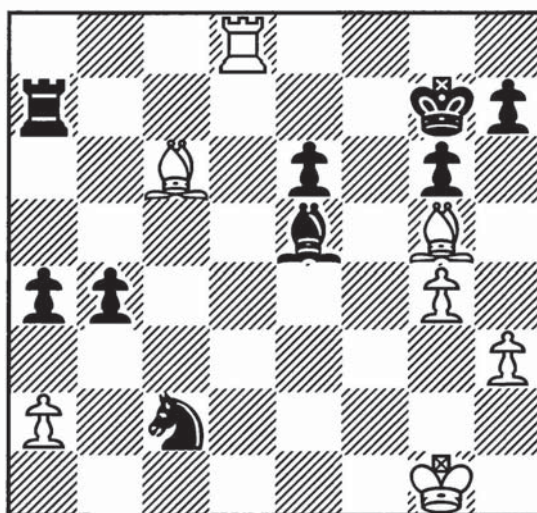




**Exercise:** Try to find a hidden chance for White to survive? (difficulty level 6)

*Joel:* Well, 32 Rxd1 looks obvious since Black's back rank is weak; but then Black has 32...fxe5 33 Rxd8+ Kg7 and White can't push f5-f6 because the f6-square is covered by the bishop and king. I tried the immediate 32 f6 Bf8 33 Rxd1, but then Black can play 33...Bc5+ 34 Kg2 Bd4 and it looks like he's okay, because if White attacks the knight with 35 Bc1, Black just plays 35...b3.

*Boris:* That is a good try, except that in the 32 f6 Bf8 33 Rxd1 line, Black can simply play 33...b3 and the a-pawn is unstoppable. So 32 f6 is incorrect. Instead, your first idea 32 Rxd1 was correct, though after 32...fxe5 33 Rxd8+ Kg7, you needed to consider 34 fxe6 fxe6.



**Exercise:** What would you play here? (difficulty level 3)



*Joel:* 35 ♖d7+ ♗xd7 36 ♙xd7 and if Black tries to protect the e6-pawn with 36...♔f7, then White has 37 ♙xa4.

*Boris:* But Black wins with 36...b3 and the pawns are unstoppable. At the beginning of the variation with 32 ♖d1, White had to see 35 ♙xa4! ♙d4+ (Black cannot capture because 35...♗xa4 36 ♖d7+ is perpetual check) 36 ♔f1 ♙e3! 37 ♙xc2 ♙xg5 38 ♖b8 ♗xa2 39 ♙b3, when the opposite-colored bishops give him good drawing chances.

Going back to 32...♙xe5, strangely enough, the natural taking of a central pawn was a mistake. Correct was 32...h6!! 33 ♙f4 b3 34 ♙e4 exf5 35 gxf5 bxa2! 36 ♙xc2 ♖c7! and White's bishop can't escape the attentions of Black's rook; i.e. 37 ♙xa4 ♗a7, or 37 ♙d3 ♖d7, or 37 ♙e4 ♖c4 38 ♙d5 ♖d4! and wins.

*Joel:* Wow, I wish I could play chess like that.

*Boris:* You have to be a computer.

**32 ♙e4? b3 33 fxe6**

If 33 axb3 then 33...a3! 34 ♙xc2 a2 35 ♗a1 ♙xe5 and Black is winning.

**33...fxe6 34 ♙f6**

34 axb3 axb3 is hopeless too; or 34...a3, as in the previous note.

**34...♘e3 35 ♖c1**

Or 35 ♖f2 ♘d1 36 ♖d2 ♘c3 and wins.

**35...bxa2 36 ♗a1 a3 37 ♖xa2 ♘d1 38 ♙d3 ♘c3 39 ♗a1 ♙xf6 40 exf6 a2 41 ♙c4 ♔f7 42 g5 ♗a5 43 ♔h1 ♖xg5 44 ♙xa2 ♘xa2 0-1**

In addition to being two pawns down, White's king is cut off in the corner.

## Chapter Eleven

# Some Strategic Ideas in the Catalan

At the end of the 1980s, I received an offer to write the section on the Catalan as part of the *Encyclopedia of Chess Openings* (published by *Informator*). I later regretted taking this job, because creating a theoretical monograph on the Catalan is extremely difficult due to the endless transpositions that can occur – i.e. each position can be reached in many different ways, even from entirely different openings such as the Queen’s Indian. I believe that the only real way to study this opening is to learn and understand the main ideas, because to study it move by move is very confusing. The following game is devoted to just one interesting strategic idea.

### Game 28 B.Gulko-D.Campora Biel 1987 *Catalan Opening*

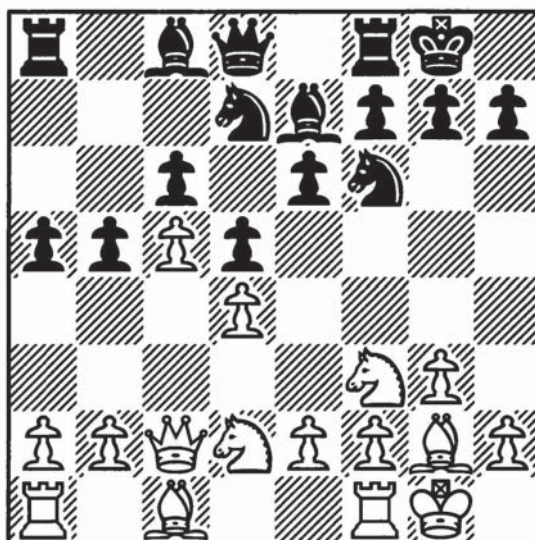
**1 d4 d5 2 c4 e6 3 ♘f3 ♙e7 4 g3 ♘f6 5 ♙g2 0-0 6 ♚c2 c6 7 0-0 b5?!**

The idea of pushing the pawn to b5 for Black in similar positions was popular at the time, mainly because of two games, T.V.Petrosian-B.Spassky, Moscow (4th matchgame) 1966, and V.Korchnoi-B.Spassky, Moscow 1971. Luckily for me, I was familiar with a strong and not so obvious counter-reaction.

**8 c5!**

My friend GM Razuvaev studied the Catalan very deeply during those years and he familiarized me with this antidote to Black’s plan. Simply defending the c4-pawn is worse: 8 b3 a5 9 ♘bd2 bxc4 10 bxc4 ♙a6 and Black has counterplay, L.Alburt-E.Sveshnikov, USSR 1974.

8...a5 9 ♖bd2 ♖bd7



**Exercise:** What is the continuation of White's plan? (difficulty level 3)

*Joel:* I don't know, but I think he has to play 10 e4.

*Boris:* Correct. It is counterintuitive because it gives Black the d5-square, a strong outpost for his knight. Nevertheless, this position is good for White, who has more space and can prepare an attack on the kingside, whereas Black's position is passive. If the white pawn was still on c4 and the black pawn still on b7, Black would obtain enough counterplay by playing ...c6-c5. Obviously, Black cannot do this in the game, so White can quietly prepare his plan while Black has to wait passively. The advantages associated with this kind of position were demonstrated by Petrosian in some of his games in the Queen's Gambit, though his bishop was not on g2.

**10 e4 ♖xe4 11 ♖xe4 dxe4 12 ♖xe4 ♖a6!?**

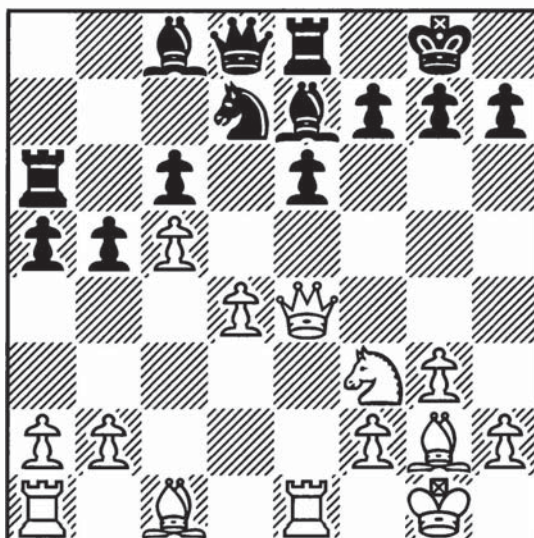
At the time, I thought Black could play 12...♖f6?! 13 ♖xc6 ♖d7, but after 14 ♖b6 ♖xb6 15 cxb6 ♖ab8 16 ♖e5 ♖xb6 17 ♖d2 b4 18 ♖fc1, White obtains a big advantage in the endgame because he controls the c-file.

*Joel:* How would you play after something like 18...♖fc8, for example?

*Boris:* In that case White is winning immediately: 19 ♖xd7 ♖xc1 20 ♖ac1 ♖xd7 21 ♖c7 ♖d6 22 ♖c6 ♖f6 23 ♖f4 and Black has to give up the exchange or resign – or give up the exchange and resign!

**13 ♖e1 ♖e8**





**Exercise:** Which move fits best with White's plan? (difficulty level 4)

**Joel:** I'm thinking about either 14 ♖e5 or 14 h4. If 14 ♖e5 then 14...♜xe5 15 dxe5 ♙xc5 is no good for White, so I think 14 h4 looks right.

**Boris:** Correct. In addition to the fact that 14 ♖e5 loses a pawn, it is strategically incorrect to exchange knights prematurely because White has more space. 14 h4, on the other hand, is entirely consistent with the demands of the position.

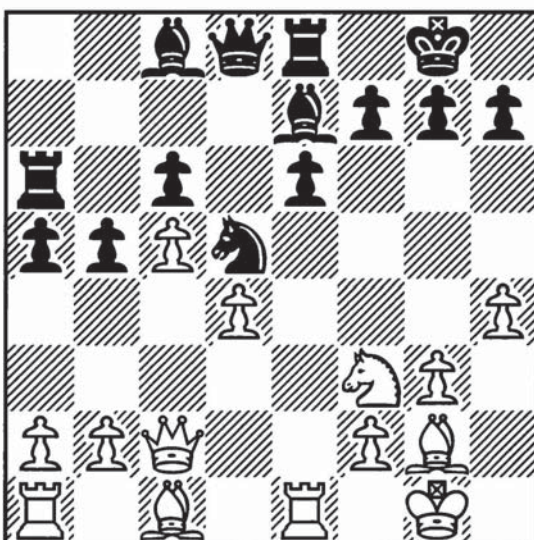
**Joel:** I remember reading that Tal said, "No knights, no attack, no mate!"

**Boris:** Right.

**14 h4! ♜f6 15 ♚c2!**

Of course White's queen has to stare at Black's kingside, so c2 is the correct square.

**15...♞d5**

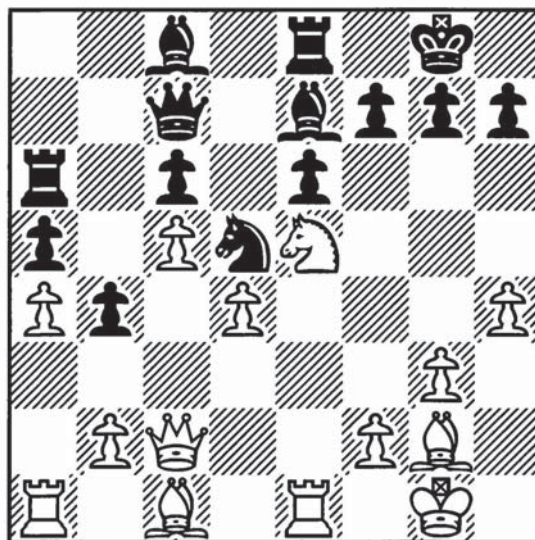


**Exercise:** How would you proceed? (difficulty level 4)

**Joel:** I'm thinking about 16 a3 (to keep the knight out), 16 ♖e5 (to increase the sphere of influence of the knight), and 16 h5. The move 16 a3 seems like a waste of time because White can just go to e4 with the queen after ...♗b4. 16 ♖e5 seems like a real possibility, but I think White's pieces are reasonably placed here, so I would play 16 h5 with the idea of playing ♖e5 after weakening Black's kingside.

**Boris:** My logic here is that Black's position is very solid – passive but solid. To break through, White has to create more opportunities. 16 ♖e5 is good because the knight is placed actively on e5, but I don't think it is best. Instead, I played 16 a4. The point of this move is that, after the inevitable 16...b4, Black's rook (which guards c6) becomes vulnerable to attack by ♕f1, while the move ...♗b4, which bothered you, is now impossible because the pawn would be on b4. Therefore 16 a4! increases my options.

**16 a4! b4 17 ♖e5 ♕c7?!**



**Exercise:** How can you develop your game? (difficulty level 4)

**Joel:** I would probably play 18 ♕e4, intending ♕f1-d3, or if 18...♗f6 then 19 ♕f3.

**Boris:** I think your plan is too slow and doesn't promise too much. In any case, after ...♗f6, Black protects h7. Instead, White has a tactical option in 18 ♕f1, attacking the rook – if it moves, White can follow with 19 ♖xc6 and 20 ♕b5. However, this idea has a drawback too: after 18 ♕f1, Black can play 18...♗b7! (18...♖a8 is bad because of 19 ♖xc6 ♕xc6 20 ♕b5) 19 ♕xa6 ♕xa6 and White can hardly utilize the extra exchange because he has no open files. As we will see shortly, I found a different solution.

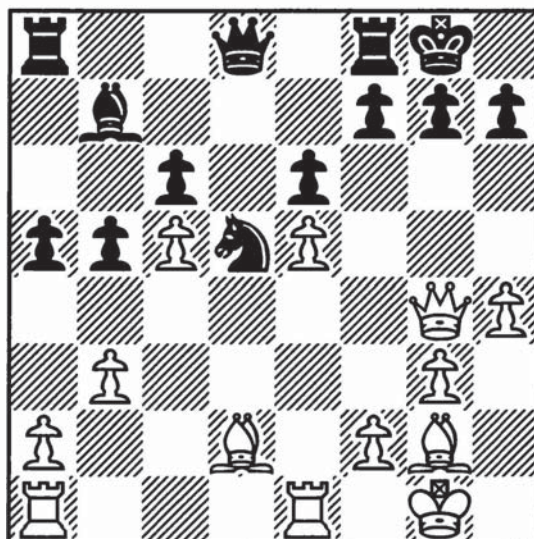
At the time, I considered 17...♕f6!? 18 ♕f1 ♕xe5! to have been more prudent for Black. Then it would again be bad to take the exchange, since 19 ♕xa6?! ♕xd4 20 ♕d3 g6 gives



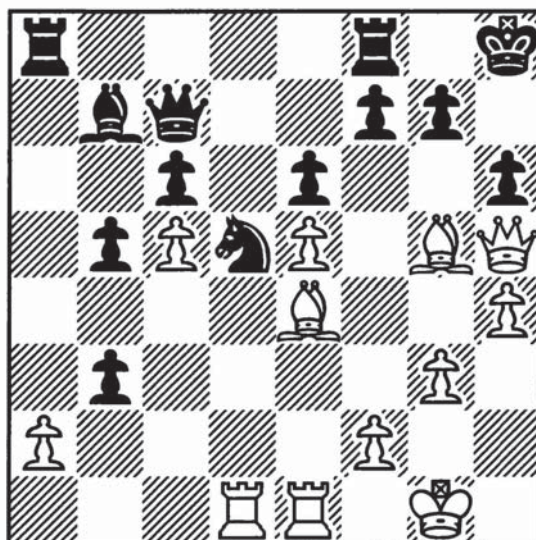
### Lessons with a Grandmaster 3

Black a good game; he also has a solid position after 19 ♖xe5?! ♜a7. The best move, therefore, is 19 dxe5!, when White takes control of the f6-square.

Half a year later, I was able to check out this kind of position in a game against IM Tony Saidy at the 1987 American Open in Los Angeles:



My play from here demonstrates how White can develop his attack. The game continued 20...♙h8 21 ♗g5 ♜c7 22 ♜ad1 h6 23 ♗e4! a4 24 ♜h5 axb3.



**Exercise:** How does White proceed? (difficulty level 6)

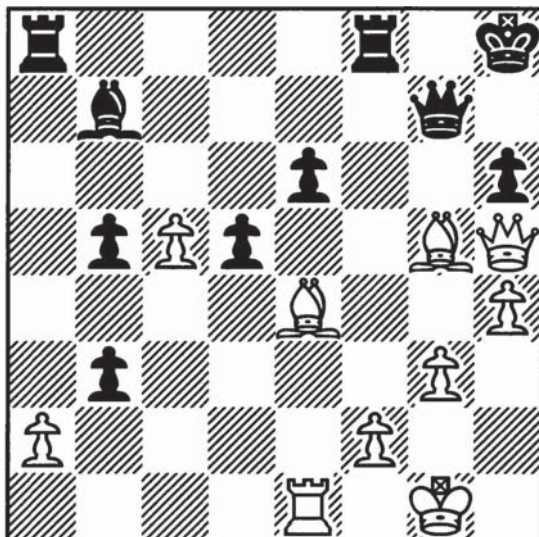
**Joel:** Maybe 25 ♗xh6, since 25...gxh6 26 ♜xh6+ is mate next move.

**Boris:** If 25 ♗xh6 was the answer, I wouldn't have assigned the problem a difficulty rating of level 6. After 25 ♗xh6, Black has 25...f5!, when White will have an extra pawn but the



position is far from clear. The same answer applies to 25 axb3 f5!.

The correct way forward is 25 ♖xd5!! f5! (still the best defense; instead, my opponent played 25...cxd5? and the game ended prosaically after 26 ♙f6! ♔g8 27 ♜g4 g6 28 ♙xg6 1-0) 26 exf6 cxd5 27 fxg7+ ♜xg7 and now:



**Exercise:** Try to find a winning variation. (difficulty level 4)

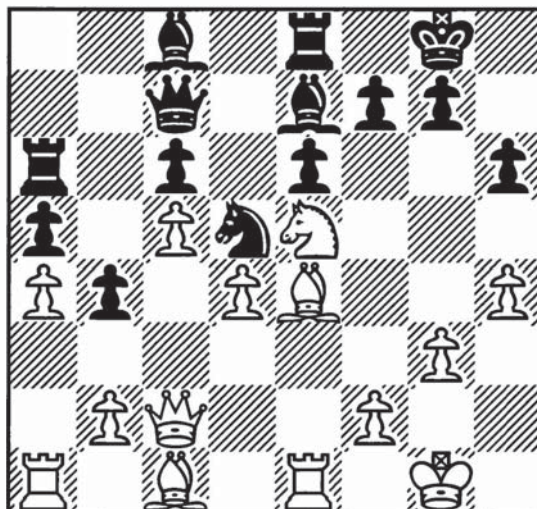
**Joel:** What is wrong with 28 ♙xh6 here?

**Boris:** 28...♜f7, threatening both the queen and f2, turns the game around. White only has one move, which is to play 28 ♙g6!! first. Then after 28...bxa2 29 ♙xh6 a1♜ 30 ♙xg7+ ♔xg7 31 ♜h7+ ♔f6 32 ♖xa1 ♖xa1+ 33 ♔g2 d4+ 34 f3 ♙d5 35 ♙h5, Black's king cannot be protected.

Returning to my game with Campora, the correct move in the earlier exercise is:

**18 ♙e4! g6**

In the case of 18...h6:

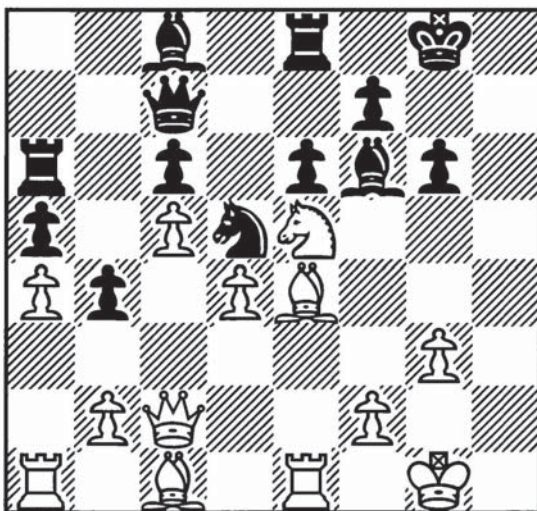


**Exercise:** How does White exploit the advantages of his position? (difficulty level 3)

**Joel:** I'm trying to make a sacrifice on the kingside work with either 19 ♔h7+ ♕f8 20 ♖xf7 ♕xf7 21 ♖g6+ ♕f8 or 19 ♖xf7 ♕xf7 20 ♔g6+ ♕f8 21 ♔xe8 ♕xe8 22 ♖g6+, but neither seems all that appealing.

**Boris:** You're right that a sacrifice on the kingside doesn't work here. Instead, White has a combination that uses the whole board, from the h- to a-file: 19 ♔h7+! ♕f8 20 ♔d3! (now White threatens to take on a6 and play ♖h7) 20...♕g8 21 ♖e2! ♖a8 22 ♖xc6 and White is winning. So you can see that 18 ♔e4 was a very tricky move. Black has to weaken his kingside with ...g7-g6.

**19 h5 ♔f6 20 hxg6 hxg6**



**Exercise:** How should White proceed? (difficulty level 3)

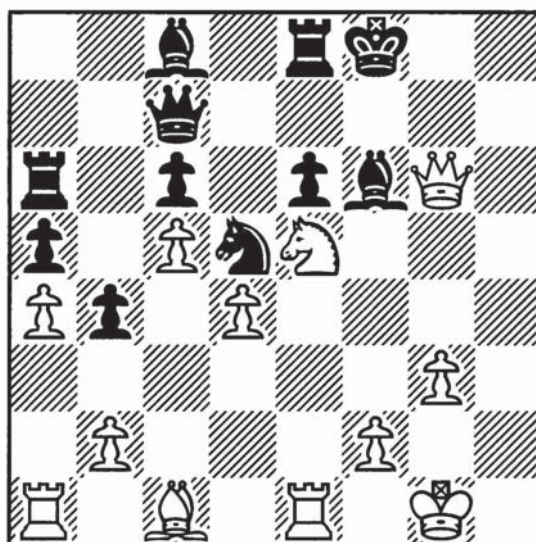
Joel: I would play 21 ♖xg6.

Boris: Correct.

**21 ♖xg6!**

Sacrificing the knight is much weaker: 21 ♘xg6?! ♕xd4! (not 21...fxg6 22 ♕xd5 and White wins) 22 ♘f4 ♘f6 and the position is unclear. *For a sacrifice to be truly dangerous, its acceptance has to be forced.*

**21...fxg6 22 ♖xg6+ ♔f8**



*Exercise:* What would you do now? (difficulty level 3)

Joel: After 23 ♕h6+ ♔e7 24 ♖f7+ ♔d8, Black seems to be holding; therefore, I need to bring more pieces into the attack with 23 ♖e4. I'm not sure where it is going but I know I need more firepower.

Boris: That is absolutely correct. Excellent!

**23 ♖e4!**

According to the computer, it is possible to play 23 ♕h6+!? ♔e7 and then 24 ♖e4, but I am not sure why White should help Black evacuate his king from the corner. From the point of view of human logic, 23 ♖e4 is better.

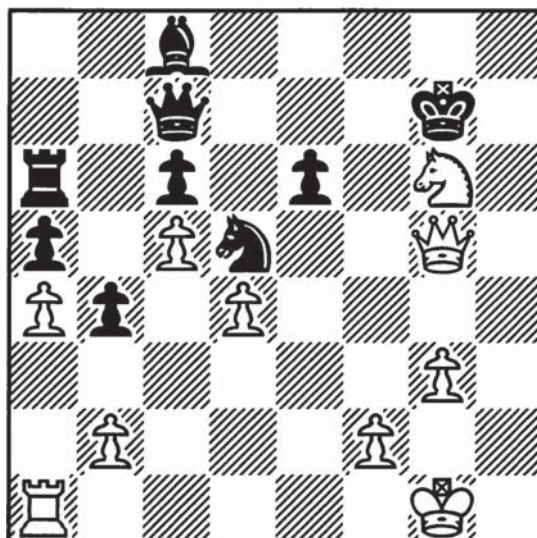
**23...♔e7**

After 23...♕xe5 24 dxe5 ♖f7, Black would lose by force: 25 ♕h6+ ♔e7 26 ♕g5+ ♔f8 27 ♖h6+ ♖g7 28 ♖h5 ♖f7 29 ♖h8+ ♖g8 30 ♖h4! ♖a7 31 ♕h6+ ♖g7 (or 31...♔f7 32 ♖f4+ ♘xf4 33 ♖f6 mate) 32 ♕xg7+ ♖xg7 33 ♖g4 ♖xe5 34 ♖h7 ♘e7 35 ♖d1 ♖f6 36 ♖d3 and there is no defense against 37 ♖f3.

**24 ♕g5! ♖f8**

Taking the bishop wouldn't have helped: 24...♕xg5 25 ♖xg5+ ♔f8 26 ♘g6+! ♔f7 (or 26...♔g8 27 ♘e7+! ♔f7 28 ♘xd5) 27 ♖h4 ♖g8 28 ♖h7+ ♖g7 29 ♖xg7+! ♔xg7





**Exercise:** How to conclude the attack? (difficulty level 1)

*Joel:* Again, I think I need the rest of the army, though I can't figure out whether I should play 30 ♖e1 or 30 ♔g2 and bring the rook into the game via the h-file.

*Boris:* Excellent! Both ways win. I like 30 ♔g2 because it is more beautiful, but 30 ♖e1 is good enough too.

**25 ♖f4! ♜d8 26 ♖xf6! ♜xf6 27 ♖e1 ♜d5 28 ♜g7+ ♔e8 29 ♖xf6 ♖a7 30 ♜g6+ ♖af7 31 ♜xf7 ♖xf7 32 ♖e5! ♜f3 33 ♜g8+ 1-0**

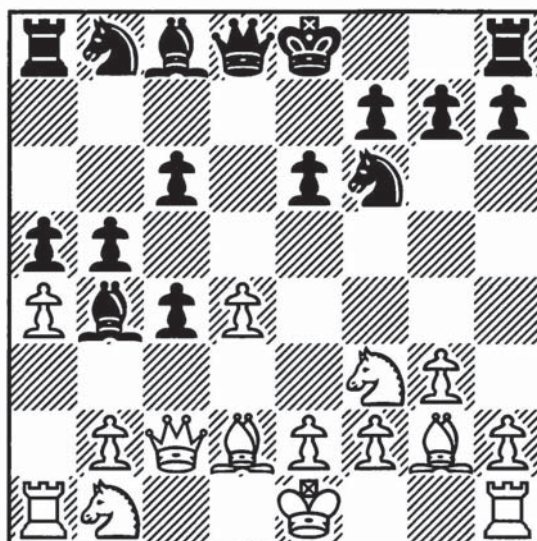
My opponent resigned because of the inevitable mate after 33...♖f8 34 ♖xe6+.

The 1974 Moscow Championship was a memorable tournament for me. I started with 11½ points out of 12 games, and two draws at the end didn't spoil my performance much. I finished clear first with a score of 13½/15, three points ahead of Balashov. We have seen three of my wins already (Games 1, 2 and 23). My opponent in the next game was a young international master who was junior champion of Europe. Sergey was an excellent theoretician, and both Kasparov and Karpov were glad to have him as a second in their matches. For example, he returned the Petroff Defense to grandmaster practice after finding many new ideas. In the following game, he introduced a new system against the Catalan, which 30 years later became very popular.

Game 29  
B.Gulko-S.Makarichev  
Moscow Championship 1974  
Catalan Opening

1  $\text{Nf3}$  d5 2 d4 e6 3 c4  $\text{Nf6}$  4 g3 dxc4 5  $\text{Bg2}$   $\text{Bb4+}$  6  $\text{Bd2}$  a5!? 7 0-0

Sixteen years later, I realized that the immediate 7  $\text{Bc2}$ ! is more precise. My game with Ljubojevic in Linares 1990 continued 7...b5?! 8 a4 c6?



**Exercise:** Find the drawback to Black's last move. (difficulty level 3)

Joel: I would play 9 axb5  $\text{Bxd2}$  10  $\text{Nbx2}$  cxb5 11  $\text{Ne5}$   $\text{Ra7}$  12  $\text{Bc6+}$ .

Boris: And after 12... $\text{Nxc6}$  13  $\text{Nxc6}$   $\text{Bd5}$  - ?

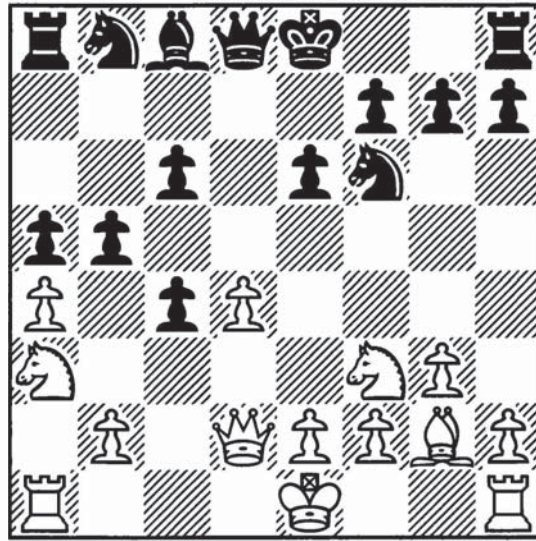
Joel: I didn't see that.

Boris: In any case, Black can also play 11... $\text{Ra6}$ , protecting c6 and staying out of any forks, so your line is incorrect.

What are Black's weaknesses? First, there is the pin on the a-file, which you exploited with your first move. Next, there is the weakness of the h1-a8 diagonal, and by playing mechanically with 10  $\text{Nbx2}$ , you missed the opportunity to take advantage of it with 10  $\text{Nfx2}$ !, after which Black's queenside is completely destroyed.

If Black wants to play this way, it is necessary to take on d2 earlier, as in the first match-game, V.Kramnik-V.Topalov, Elista 2006: 7... $\text{Bxd2+}$  8  $\text{Bxd2}$ ! (after 8  $\text{Nbx2}$  b5 9 a4 c6, Black has a good game again) 8...c6!? 9 a4 b5 10 axb5 cxb5 11  $\text{Bg5}$  (this double attack on g7 and b5 is one reason why 7  $\text{Bc2}$  is more accurate than 7 0-0 0-0 8  $\text{Bc2}$ , when the g7-pawn is already protected) 11...0-0 12  $\text{Bxb5}$   $\text{a6}$  13  $\text{Ba4}$   $\text{Bb6}$  14 0-0  $\text{Bxb2}$ , though Black doesn't have any serious problems here.

A serious blow to this whole line came in the fourth matchgame, V.Anand-V.Topalov, Sofia 2010, where Anand played 10 ♖a3!!.



*Joel:* What's so good about this move?

*Boris:* First, note that 10 ♖c3 can be met by 10...b4, whereas Black doesn't have this move with the knight on a3 because the pawn on c4 would hang. Second, with the knight on c3, Black can seek exchanges with ...♞d5, which would be good in some cases, but now doesn't have that either. After 10 ♖a3! ♙d7 11 ♞e5 ♞d5 12 e4 ♞b4 13 0-0 0-0 14 ♚fd1 ♙e8 15 d5!, Anand had a big advantage.

However, all these brilliancies and subtleties weren't worked out until 36 years after my game with Makarichev.

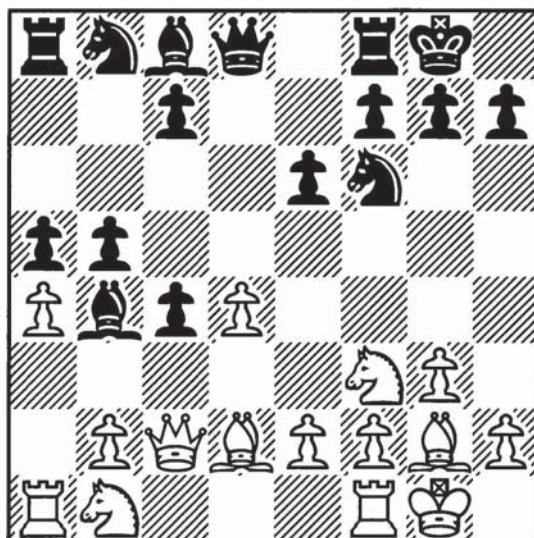
**7...0-0 8 ♚c2 b5?!**

Again, it was more precise to take on d2 first. After 8...♙xd2! 9 ♞bxd2 b5 10 a4 c6 11 b3 cxb3 12 ♞xb3, White has sufficient compensation for the pawn but no more than that.

**9 a4!**

Korchnoi tried 9 ♙g5 ♙b7 10 a4 c6 11 ♞c3 against Noguieras in Mesa 1992, but didn't obtain an advantage after 11...♞bd7!.





**9...bxa4**

Makarichev doesn't overlook 9...c6 10 axb5 ♖xd2 11 ♜fxd2!, which would be similar to my game with Ljubojevic.

**10 ♜c3!**

More promising than 10 ♜xa4?! ♜b7, as in A.Karpov-J.Piket, Monaco (4th matchgame) 1999, where Black is not worse.

**10...♜b7?!**

*In positions with weak pawns a knight can be a more valuable piece than a bishop. As a result, 10...♜xc3!? was preferable.*

*Joel: Why is that?*

*Boris: Because weak pawns are usually connected with weak squares, the occupation of which can make knights very powerful.*

**11 ♜xa4 ♜xd2**

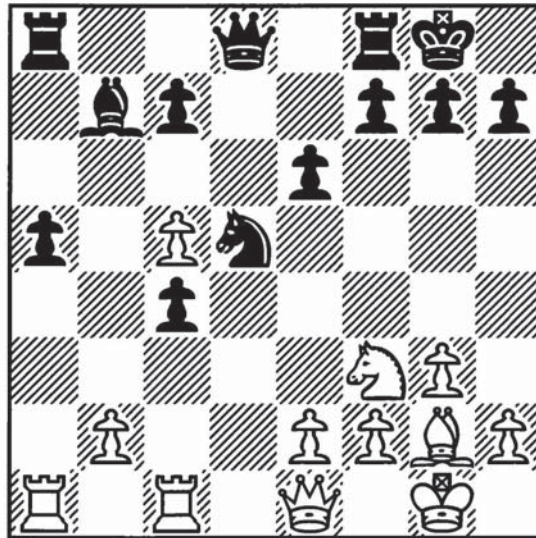
Stronger was 11...♜d5!.

**12 ♜xd2 ♜bd7 13 ♜fc1 ♜b6**

13...♜d5 was better here too.

**14 ♜c5! ♜e4 15 ♜e1! ♜xc5 16 dxc5 ♜d5?!**

Another inaccuracy. Black should have preferred 16...♜xf3 17 ♜xf3 ♜d5 18 ♜xa5 ♜b8 with counterplay. It looks like Makarichev values bishops more than knights, as most chess players do. First, he didn't exchange his dark-squared bishop for the knight on c3, and now didn't exchange his light-squared bishop for the knight on f3. This is a common mistake because, as we've already indicated, in positions with broken pawn chains a knight is often more valuable than a bishop. Ulf Andersson was an expert in finding positions where the knights were better than the bishops.



**Exercise:** How would you utilize the advantages of your position? (difficulty level 2)

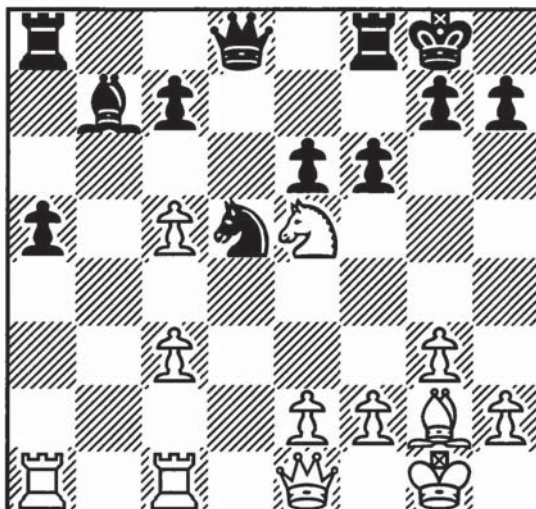
*Joel:* By playing 17 ♖e5.

*Boris:* Yes. White has to include all of his pieces in the assault.

**17 ♖e5!**

Now White seizes the initiative. Taking one of the pawns was worse: after 17 ♖xc4 ♗b4 or 17 ♖xa5 ♜f6 18 e4 ♗e7 19 e5 ♜g6 20 ♖xa8 ♙xa8 21 ♖xc4 ♙d5 22 ♖c1 ♗c6, Black has counterplay.

**17...c3! 18 bxc3 f6**



**Exercise:** Try to find a combination that uses all of the advantages of White's position. (difficulty level 6).

If it proves too difficult to calculate to the end, what would you play instinctively? (difficulty level 2)

Joel: I guess I'd play 19 c6.

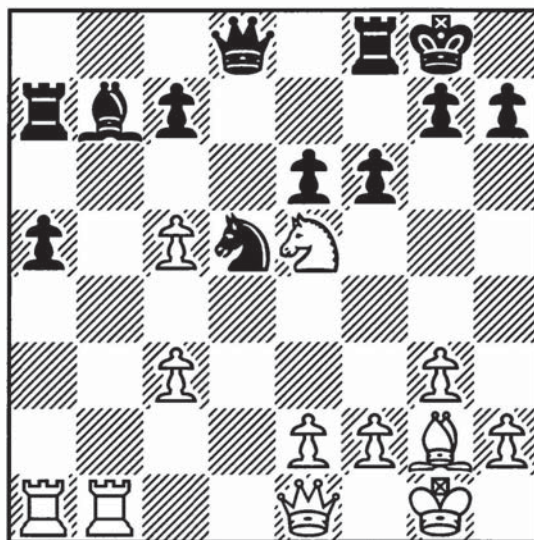
Boris: That isn't a bad move, but your instinct must be to improve the position of your pieces before pushing pawns and playing aggressively.

Joel: What about 19 ♖cb1 as a move?

Boris: Correct.

### 19 ♖cb1! ♗a7

Here 19...fxe5 20 ♖xb7 a4 was more stubborn, though after 21 ♜d2, White is much better anyway.



**Exercise:** Now what would you do? (difficulty level 3)

Joel: I would play 20 ♘c4, attacking a5, followed by 21 ♘e3.

Boris: You overlooked a fork on c2 in your variation; i.e. 20 ♘c4 a4 21 ♘e3? ♘xe3 22 ♖xb7 ♖xb7 23 ♙xb7 ♘c2. In any case, *usually you move forwards not backwards when you're pressing for the advantage and playing aggressively*. White has placed his pieces on their ideal squares. What should you do next?

Joel: Play with the pawns?

Boris: Yes. You have to start to break through with pawns.

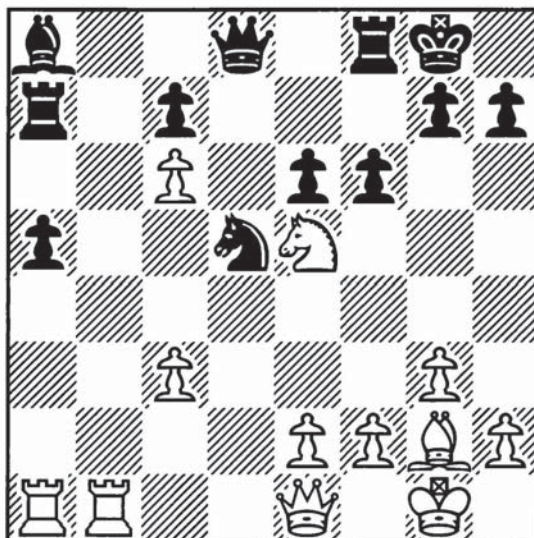
Joel: So now it's time to play 20 c6, right?

Boris: Correct.

### 20 c6 ♙a8?!

Black could avoid the main line of the combination by playing 20...♙c8 21 ♘c4 a4, but then 22 e4 ♘e7 23 e5 is still much better for White.





**Exercise:** How does White develop his combination? (difficulty level 4)

*Joel:* I would play 21 ♘d7, followed by 22 ♖b8.

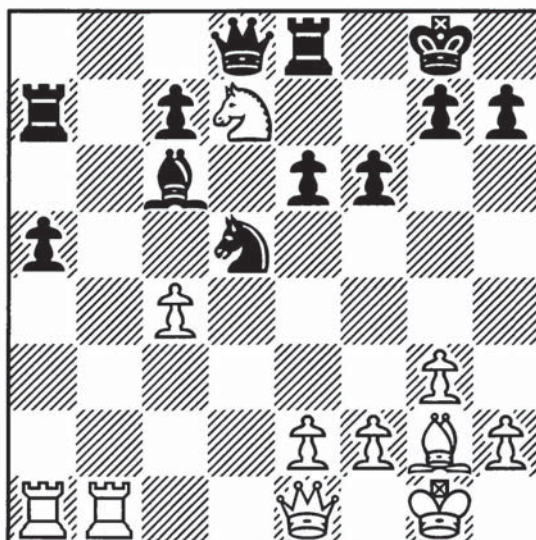
*Boris:* 21 ♘d7 is correct, but the follow-up 21...♖e8 22 ♖b8 is not decisive. Black can defend after 22...♗e7. Your pieces are overstretched but placed optimally. You have to find a concrete solution. What should you do?

*Joel:* Push my pawns. I guess 22 c4 fits the bill.

*Boris:* Correct.

**21 ♘d7! ♖e8 22 c4! ♗xc6**

After 22...♘b6 23 ♖xa5 ♖xa5 24 ♗xa5 ♘xc4 25 ♗a7, Black's position is hopeless. His bishop is imprisoned on a8, which shows the importance of exchanging bishop for knight at the appropriate moment.



**Exercise:** Find the final blow. (difficulty level 4)

Joel: I like 23 ♖b8.

Boris: And if he plays 23...♙b7 - ?

Joel: 24 cxd5.

Boris: Then Black has 24...♜xb8 25 dxe6 ♜a8 with chances to survive. White has a better way.

Joel: 24 ♖xb7 looks tempting.

Boris: And after 24...♖xb7 - ?

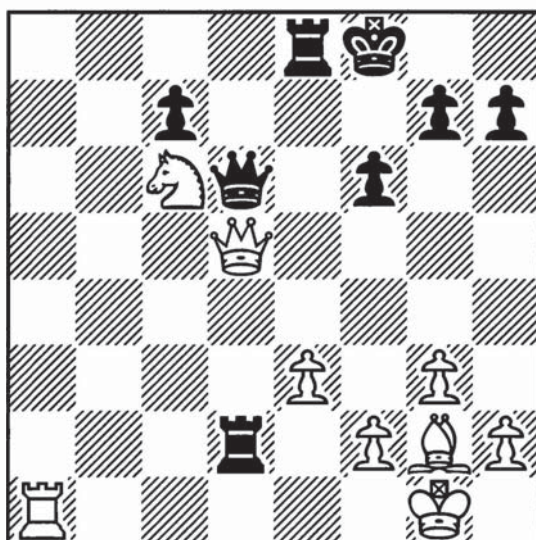
Joel: 25 ♘c6, followed by 26 ♜xa5.

Boris: Very good!

**23 ♖b8!**

The knight doesn't penetrate so deeply into enemy territory very often.

**23...♙b7 24 ♖xb7! ♖xb7 25 ♘c6 ♜d6 26 cxd5 exd5 27 ♜xa5 ♖b2 28 ♜xd5+ ♙f8 29 e3 ♖d2**



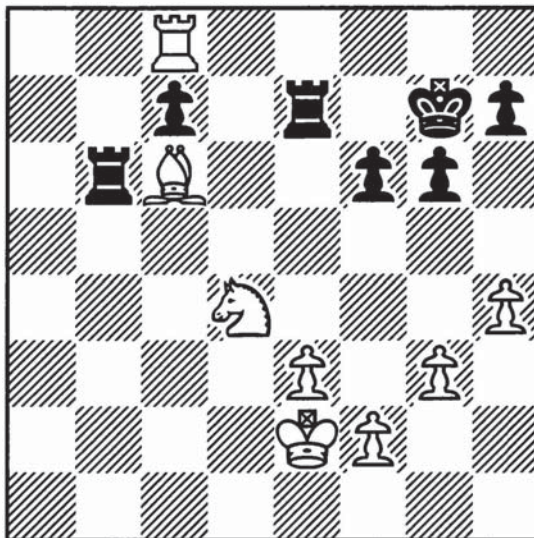
**30 ♜xd6+**

White was short on time here and decides to simplify the position. I could have won more quickly in the middlegame with 30 ♜h5!. This is the same psychological mistake as I made in my previous game against Romanishin. *Playing safely in a winning position prolongs the game and sometimes gives your opponent survival chances.*

**30...♖xd6 31 ♙f3 g6 32 ♙g2 ♖d2 33 ♙f1 ♖e6 34 ♖a8+ ♙g7 35 ♖c8**

Black is paralyzed here, so White quietly prepares the final mating combination.

**35...♖d7 36 ♖b8 ♖de7 37 ♖c6 ♖d7 38 h4 ♖ed6 39 ♙e1 ♖f7 40 ♙e2 ♖fd7 41 ♖d4 ♖b6 42 ♙c6 ♖e7**

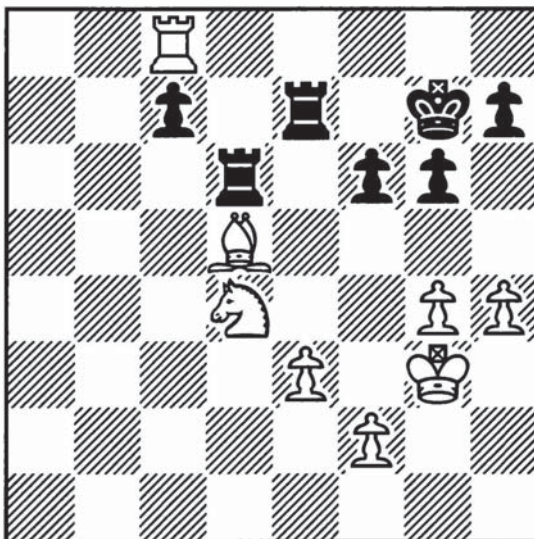


**Exercise:** How do you improve White's position further? (difficulty level 2)

**43 g4!**

Now Black can't move any of his pawns because each would create new weaknesses.

**43...Ra6 44 Qf3 Bb6 45 Qg3 Ra6 46 Qd5 Bd6**



**Exercise:** How can you finish the game in style? (difficulty level 2)

**Joel:** 47 Bg8+ Kh6 48 Qf5+! gxf5 49 g5+ fxg5 (or 49...Kh5 50 Qh3 mate) 50 hxg5+ Kh5 51 Qf3 mate.

**Boris:** Correct!

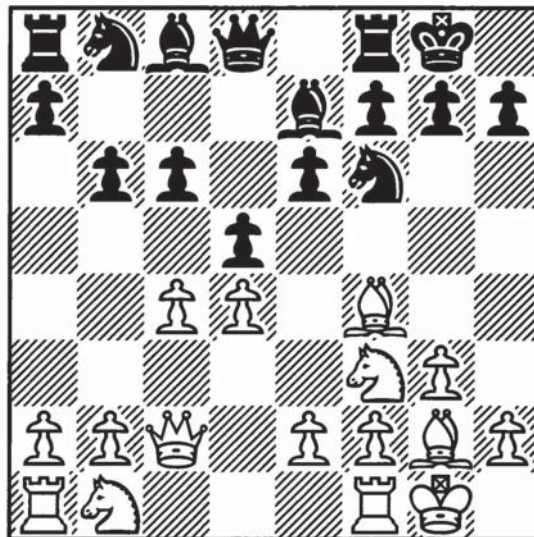
**47 Qf5+! gxf5 48 Bg8+ Kh6 49 g5+ fxg5 50 hxg5+ Kh5 51 Qf3 mate**



Among the most difficult positions to play in chess are those with hanging and isolated pawns. The greatest modern players, Carlsen and Kramnik, try to reach these positions with both colors, hoping to outplay their opponents in the middlegame. The transformation of pawn structures is very difficult to evaluate and positional mistakes are common.

*Game 30*  
**B.Gulko-M.Chandler**  
Hastings 1988/89  
*Catalan Opening*

**1 d4 ♘f6 2 c4 e6 3 g3 ♙b4+ 4 ♙d2 ♙e7 5 ♙g2 d5 6 ♘f3 0-0 7 0-0 c6 8 ♚c2 b6 9 ♙f4**



**9...♙b7**

For Black it is better not to tolerate a very strong bishop on f4 and play the immediate 9...♘h5, followed by ...f7-f5, transposing to a Stonewall structure. This is how Botvinnik played in his 1963 world championship match against Petrosian.

*Joel:* What happens if he retreats? Do you go ahead with ...f7-f5 - ?

*Boris:* Both ...f7-f5 and bringing the knight back to f6 are playable.

*Joel:* So you are essentially telling White that you will not allow the bishop on f4.

*Boris:* Yes. It is a very good position for the bishop.

**10 ♚d1!? ♘a6**

A novelty that soon became popular after this game; previously 10...♘bd7 had been played. Alternatively, Black can play 10...♘h5!? with same idea as in the previous note.

*Joel:* What is the point of 10...♘a6 - ?

*Boris:* The knight can jump to b4 in some lines and it leaves the d7-square free for the king's knight, which can retreat in order to challenge a white knight if it shows up on e5.

### 11 ♖e5 c5!?

A sharp attempt to solve all of Black's problems. Now the price of moves becomes very high as the position opens up.

Instead, Tiviakov saved a slightly inferior position after 11...♖c8!? 12 ♖c3 ♖d7 (here 12...c5?! is not good because of 13 dxc5 and White has strong pressure on d5) 13 ♖b3 ♖xe5 14 ♗xe5 ♗d6, R.Wojtaszek-S.Tiviakov, Havana 2008.

If Black plays directly 11...♖d7 12 ♖c3 ♖xe5?! (12...♖c8 transposes to Tiviakov's game), a difficult defense awaits him after 13 dxe5 ♖c8 14 cxd5 cxd5 15 ♖ac1. Even worse would be 14...exd5 15 e4, when Black has a lot of problems: if he plays 15...dxe4, then after 16 ♖xe4 the white knight will be able to reach the d6-square.

*Joel:* And if he doesn't take, White wins a pawn?

*Boris:* Not immediately because there will be a pin on the c-file after 15...♖d8 16 cxd5 cxd5, but White will saddle Black with an isolated pawn and will have active pieces too. Overall, it will be an unpleasant position for Black to defend.

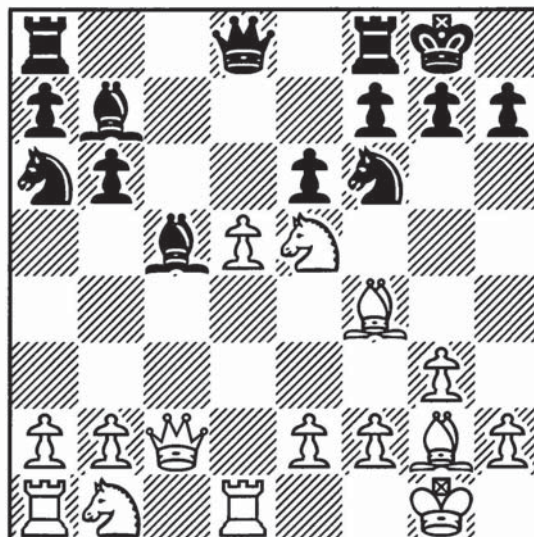
*Joel:* What about 11...♖b4 - ?

*Boris:* This move deserved attention. After 12 ♖c1, White threatens to push the knight back so Black has to give up the center with 12...dxc4 in order to create a square for his knight on d5. In this case, White will have more space, but that is nothing to be immediately afraid of.

### 12 dxc5! ♗xc5!?

The two other recaptures didn't solve Black's problems either: 12...♖xc5?! 13 ♖c3 with strong pressure on d5, or 12...bxc5?! 13 ♖c3 ♖b6 14 a3 ♖fd8 15 ♖d3 and Black's position is uncomfortable again.

### 13 cxd5

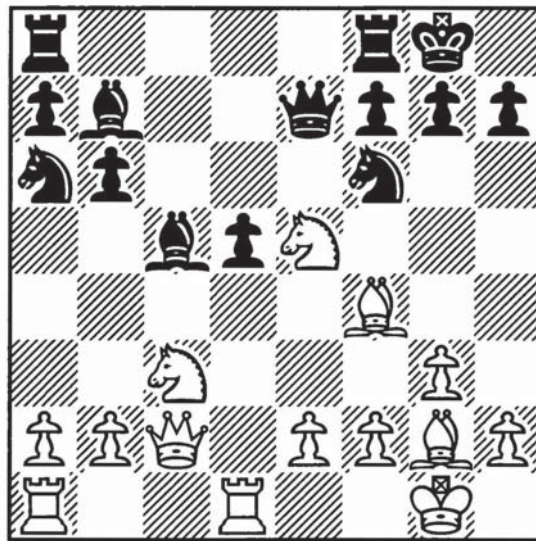


**Exercise:** How should Black handle this position? (difficulty level 5)

*Joel:* 13...♔e7 looks like it loses to 14 d6, and taking on d5 with a piece loses to 15 e4 because of the pin; so that leaves 13...exd5, when Black will need to find a square for the queen in order to escape the dangers on the d-file.

*Boris:* The same logic was used by my opponent, but he missed a very subtle move: 13...♖c8!, getting out of the way of the rook on the d-file and threatening to take on f2. The only way for White to fight for advantage is with 14 ♘c3 (it is unattractive to keep the pawn with 14 e4 because of 14...exd5 15 exd5 ♘b4 16 ♖b3 ♗f5 and Black has good counterplay with threats of ...♘c2 or ...g7-g5, targeting the weak f2-square) 14...♘xd5 15 ♘xd5! ♙xf2+ 16 ♙xf2 ♗xc2 17 ♘e7+ ♙h8 18 ♙xb7 ♗c5+ 19 ♙g2 ♗xe7 20 ♙xa6, when White can hope that the activity of his minor pieces will give him the superiority.

**13...exd5?! 14 ♘c3 ♗e7**



**Exercise:** What would you play as White? (difficulty level 4)

*Joel:* 15 ♗f5 looks attractive, but I'm worried about 15...g6, followed by 16...♘h5. So I would play 15 ♘d3, trying to exchange off Black's dark-squared bishop, and then gang up on the IQP.

*Boris:* Your answer shows your biggest problem: You don't like, and try to avoid, calculating variations. At the same time, your intuition offered you the best move: 15 ♗f5. Then after 15...g6, White has 16 ♗g5 (the only reasonable move) and has now induced yet another weakness in Black's position, the knight on f6. You reject the best move because it requires calculation.

*Joel:* How do you overcome that problem?

*Boris:* It is a habit. You have to overcome it with effort and training. Practice calculating variations and try to *force* yourself to calculate variations.

*Joel:* I think the problem is that I play too much blitz online.

*Boris:* Yes, blitz chess reinforces impulsive decision-making rather than thoroughness.



This is why Botvinnik recommended to his students not to play blitz because it develops shallowness in your play.

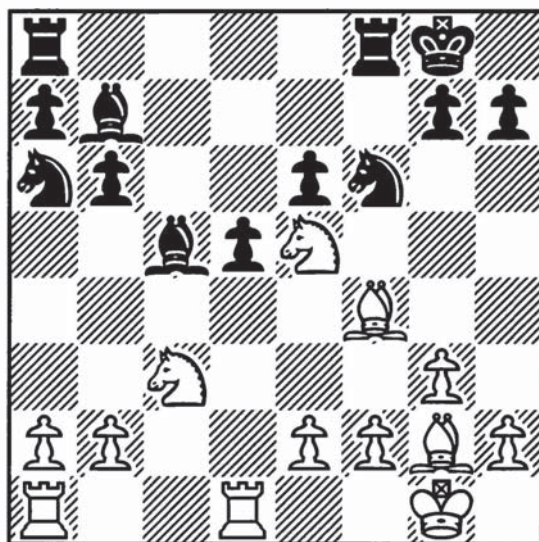
**15 ♣f5!**

The move you offered, 15 d3, restricts White's queen from participating in the game; for example, 15...h6 16 ac1 fd8 and White's advantage has diminished.

15...♔e6

A typical reaction, trying to rid himself of the weakness on d5, but it creates another weakness on e6. This is critical because the evaluation of the position after the exchange of queens determines the value of 15 ♖f5. Note that the active 15...d4 was no good either, because after 16 ♙xb7 ♜xb7 17 ♜b5 ♜d5 (17...♙f8 18 ♙g5 is just bad for Black) 18 e3, the d4-pawn would be condemned.

**16 ♔xe6 fxe6**

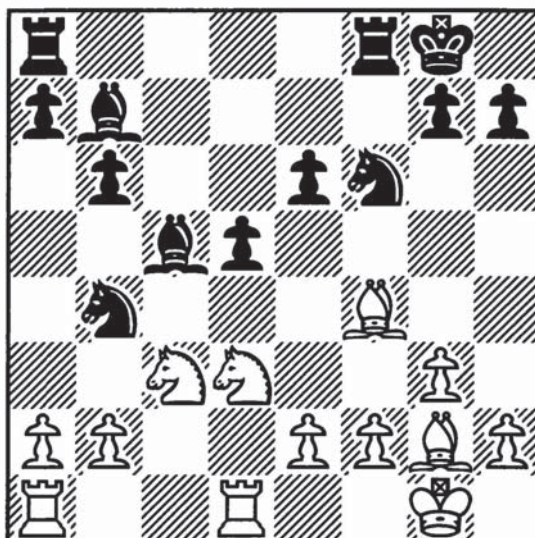


**Exercise:** What should White play now? (difficulty level 3)

*Joel:* I think I would attack the pawn with 17 ♖h3. I considered 17 ♘d3 because of how important Black's dark-squared bishop is in defending the dark squares, but I didn't see where it got me after 17...♙e7. Whereas 17 ♖h3 creates a concrete threat: 17...♜ae8 18 ♘b5 and White wins the a7-pawn, while 17...♞fe8 leaves the rook passive.

**Boris:** I think you overestimate the power of 17...♖a8 18 ♘b5, since 18...♗e4 gives Black good counterplay. The move you rejected, 17 ♘d3!, was much better. Now after 17...♗e7, White does play 18 ♙h3 and Black cannot conveniently protect e6; e.g. 18...♙c8 19 ♖ac1 and White is much better.

**17** d3! b4

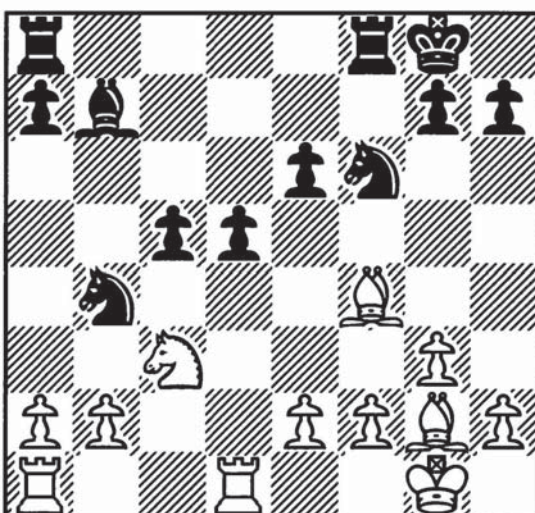


**Exercise:** What would you play here? (difficulty level 4)

*Joel:* I think I would take the knight and play ♖b5, threatening to come into c7 or d6 with the knight. Taking on c5 seems to strengthen Black's center.

*Boris:* It is correct that taking on c5 strengthens Black's center but his weaknesses on the dark squares are more important. The solution is difficult to find exactly because it strengthens Black's center. In the line you offer 18 ♖xb4 ♙xb4 19 ♖b5, Black sacrifices the exchange with 19...♙c5! 20 ♖c7 ♖g4! and starts an attack on f2. In this case, the position would become messy and Black would not be without chances.

**18 ♖xc5! bxc5**



**Exercise:** How would you proceed? (difficulty level 4)

*Joel:* I would be hard pressed not to play 19 ♖d6.

*Boris:* And after 19...♜fc8 - ?

*Joel:* I would play 20 ♖h3.

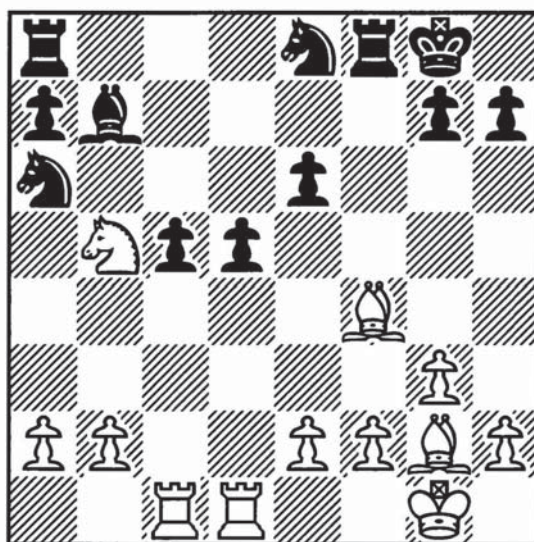
*Boris:* Then Black plays 20...♞f7.

*Joel:* So I would play 21 ♘b5.

*Boris:* And after 21...♞e8 - ? The problem is that your dark-squared bishop is where your knight needs to be. The correct move is 19 ♘b5!. The knight on c3 is the only white minor piece that is not in action, so it is important to activate it. With 19 ♘b5, White hits all of Black's weak points: a7, c7, d6, e6, and c5.

**19 ♘b5! ♞e8 20 ♜ac1 ♞a6**

If Black tries to push the knight back with 20...a6, White has 21 ♜xc5! axb5 22 ♜xb5 and wins, though 21 ♘d6 is not bad either.



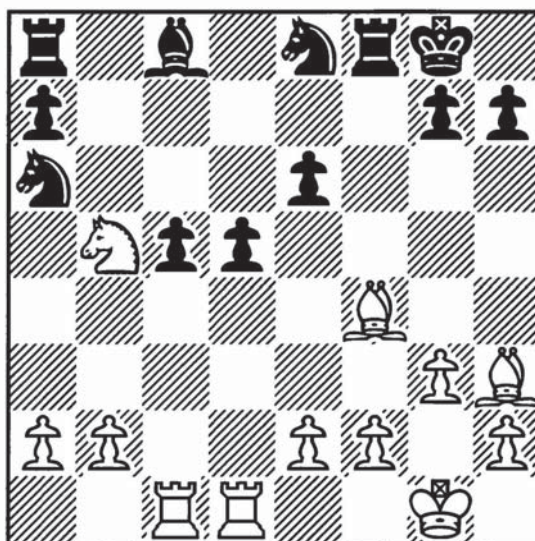
**Exercise:** How to develop White's assault? (difficulty level 3)

*Joel:* I think I would play 21 ♖h3 again.

*Boris:* Correct. This move strains Black's defense.

**21 ♖h3! ♖c8**





**Exercise:** How would you proceed now? (difficulty level 3)

*Joel:* All my pieces are optimally placed, but I don't see any good pawn breaks. 22 e4 d4 seems reasonable for Black.

*Boris:* What would White play after 22...d4 - ?

*Joel:* I didn't really calculate it; it just looked okay for Black.

*Boris:* That is your biggest problem again. Calculate the consequences of 22...d4.

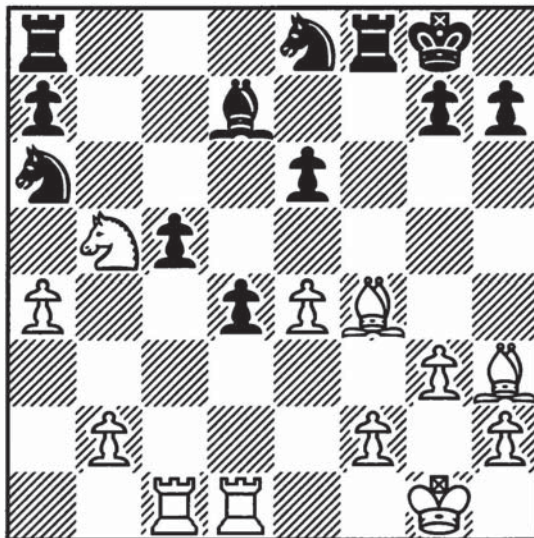
*Joel:* Well, perhaps White can sacrifice on d4 with 23 ♖xd4 cxd4 24 ♜xc8 ♜xc8 25 ♜xe6+, followed by ♜xc8.

*Boris:* Very good. And if Black responded with 23...e5 instead, what would you play?

*Joel:* I would play 24 ♜xc8 ♜xc8 (otherwise the knight on a6 hangs) 25 ♜xe5 and Black cannot take the knight on d4 because the c-pawn is pinned.

*Boris:* Very good. After 21 ♜h3, Black has a bad choice. In addition to 21...♜c8, he would lose a pawn after 21...♜f7 22 ♜d6, or if 21...♜f6 then 22 ♜e5 ♜h6 23 ♜g4 and Black would have unsolvable problems with the rook a prisoner on h6.

**22 e4! ♜d7 23 a4! d4**



**Exercise:** What would you play here? (difficulty level 4)

*Joel:* The only thing I see is 24 b4, but after 24...cxb4 25 ♖xd4, Black can play 25...e5.

*Boris:* If you calculate a little further you will see that White has 26 ♖xd7 exf4 27 e5!, when Black has a worthless knight on e8.

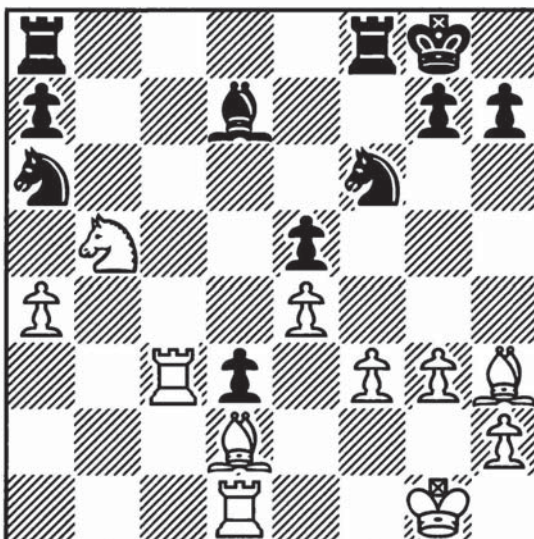
**24 b4! ♖xb4**

There's nothing better.

**25 ♖xc5 d3 26 ♗d2 ♖a6 27 ♖c3**

Now White wins a pawn with a superior position. The only trouble was that, after solving these complicated strategic problems, I was short on time – but then so was my opponent.

**27...♗f6 28 f3 e5**



**Exercise:** Does White have to exchange bishops? (difficulty level 3)

**Joel:** I think so. If he doesn't and plays something like 29 ♖f1, then Black has 29...♟b4, followed by 30...a5, when White will have to give his light-squared bishop for the knight in order to win the pawn.

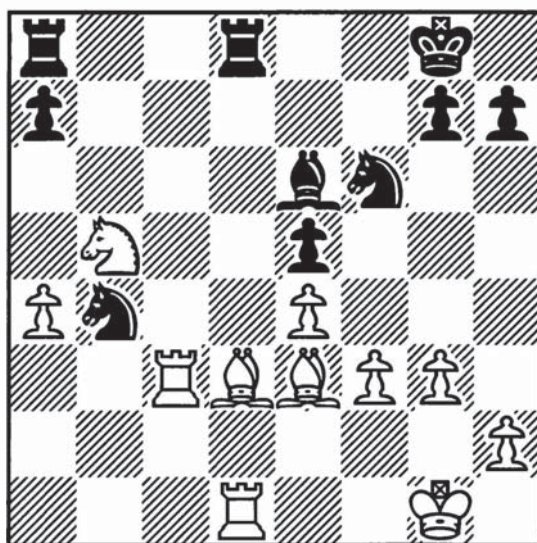
**Boris:** The right answer is exactly 29 ♖f1!. This position illustrates the relativity of Fine's rule: *The side with a material advantage should exchange pieces, while the side with a material disadvantage should exchange pawns and keep pieces. Exchanges are only good if they don't worsen your position.*

Here White should not exchange pieces, since after 29 ♖xd7 ♜xd7 30 ♜xd3 ♜dc5 31 ♜a3 ♜fd8, Black's pieces would become active and White is tied down and pinned. White should not help Black coordinate his pieces.

**29 ♖f1! ♜fd8**

The move you offered, 29...♟b4, is met by 30 ♜c4, when Black doesn't have any good options.

**30 ♖xd3 ♖e6 31 ♖e3 ♟b4**



**32 ♖e2**

White could take a second pawn with 32 ♟xa7, and if 32...♜d7 33 ♟c6 ♜c8 then 34 ♟e7+ ♜xe7 35 ♜xc8+ ♖xc8 36 ♖c5 ♟xd3 37 ♖xe7 ♖a6 38 ♖xf6 gxf6 39 ♜b1 wins, but it doesn't make sense to calculate such long lines in time trouble.

**32...♜xd1+ 33 ♖xd1 ♜d8 34 ♖e2 a5 35 ♜c5**

Equally good was 35 ♖f2, followed by ♖e1, and Black doesn't have any counterplay.

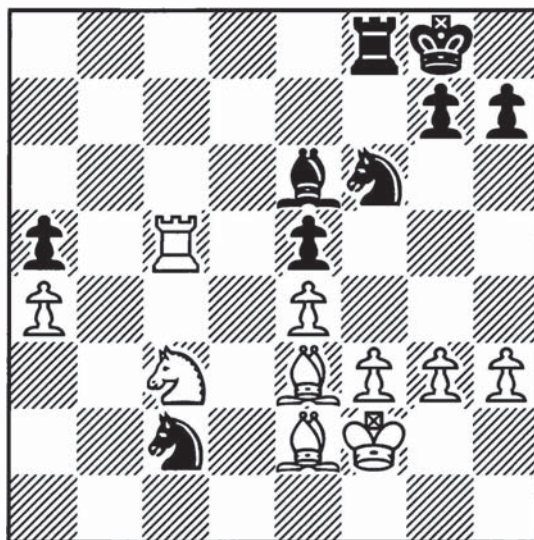
**35...♖b3 36 ♟c3 ♟c2 37 ♖f2 ♜f8 38 h3 ♟d7 39 ♜c7**

When short of time it is instinctive to play active moves. Otherwise I could have again taken a second pawn with 39 ♜xa5.

**39...♟f6 40 ♜c5 ♖e6**



If he returned the knight to d7, I would have taken the a4-pawn. After this I reached the time control and White's task is easy.



#### 41 ♖f1 h5

Simplifying the position with 41..♗xe3 42 ♔xe3 ♜c8 43 ♜xc8 ♕xc8 of course didn't promise any survival chances after 44 f4.

42 ♜xe5 ♜c8 43 ♜c5 ♜b8 44 ♗b5 ♗b4 45 ♗d4 ♕xh3 46 ♜xa5 ♕xf1 47 ♔xf1 ♜c8 48 ♜b5 ♗c2 49 ♗xc2 ♜xc2 50 a5 ♜a2 51 ♕d4 ♗h7 52 ♜b7 ♗f6 53 ♕xf6 gxf6 54 ♜b5 h4 55 gxh4 ♔g7 56 h5 ♔h6 57 ♜f5 ♔g7 58 ♔e1 1-0

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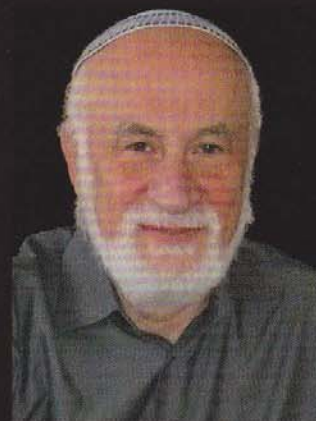
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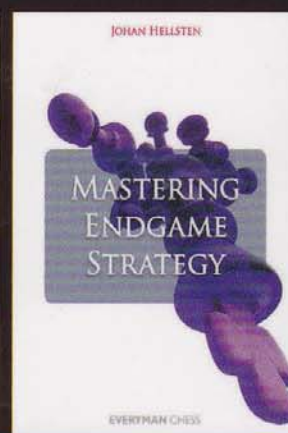
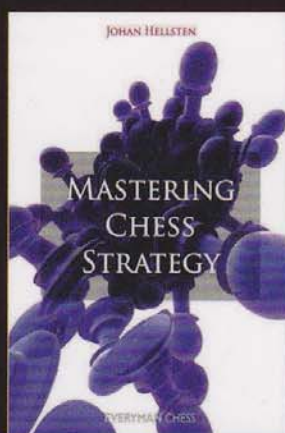
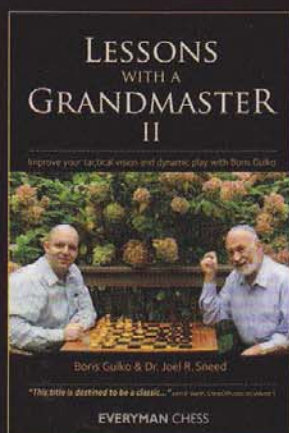
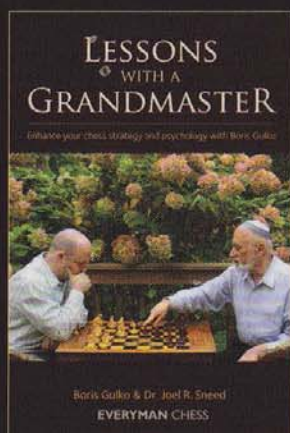
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